

2012 Judges' Comments – Newspaper Division II

General Excellence

First Place

Lansing State Journal

Second Place

The Flint Journal

Third Place (tie)

Traverse City Record-Eagle

Third Place (tie)

Jackson Citizen Patriot

Best Digital Presence

First Place

The Flint Journal

David Harris

"Offbeat by David Harris"

Now, here's the way to write cop news. I am not surprised how much traffic this blog drives.

Second Place

Lansing State Journal

Anne Erickson

"Localmusic beat"

Fun Twitter voice on a great topic.

Third Place

Port Huron Times Herald

"Police blotter"

Love the Google map that accompanies this blotter. Great way to engage readers on a topic that is very important to the community.

Best Informational Graphics or Illustrations

First Place

The Holland Sentinel

Sarah Leach

"Sea Change Ahead for Lake Kalamazoo"

No comments.

Second Place

The Holland Sentinel

Sarah Leach

"Road Work: Summer Construction Season"

No comments.

Third Place

The Holland Sentinel

Sarah Heth

"Blue Monday"

No comments.

Best Feature Story

First Place

Battle Creek Enquirer

Chuck Carlson

"She's a Real Card"

Enjoyable all the way through, this is a lively story that lets a lively lady speak for herself. The writer doesn't get in the way of the subject's personality and gift of gab, but does weave the tale together for maximum effect. Excellent handling and writing. This was just plain fun to read.

Second Place

The Bay City Times

Justin Engel

"The War Room"

This is very good craftsmanship on a detailed, complicated story, spanning many decades. It could overwhelm the reader with tragedy, but manages to relay the difficult days of war for the subject within the scope of his entire life. Very good writing throughout.

Third Place

The Holland Sentinel

Lisa Ermak

"Helping Paws"

This writer is a good storyteller whose subjects, both four-legged and two-legged, shine through with their personalities. Reading the first couple of graphs, I can hear and see this therapy dog at work, and the joy with which she is greeted. Good writing.

Best Editorial

First Place

Traverse City Record-Eagle

Mike Tyree

"Judge's Poor Decisions Should Cost Him His Post"

Well-argued editorial. Took a strong position against the judge and his actions, yet it carried some empathy, too. The top entry in an ultra-competitive class.

Second Place

Port Huron Times Herald

Tom Walker

"Farm Forced to Pay for River Spill"

Excellent editorial taking to task a local entity guilty of polluting water and being reluctant to pay the penalty for doing so. Clear arguments and well-written.

Third Place

The Holland Sentinel

Jim Timmermann

"Words We'd Like to Hear More Of"

Writing about words, their meanings and words that should come back into parlance is a refreshing change from corrupt and inept politicians. A nice change of pace.

Best Sports Enterprise

First Place

Lansing State Journal

Graham Couch

"1963 NCAA Regional at the Center of Change"

Truly good sports enterprise journalism. Loved reading about the sociological impact of a basketball game.

Second Place

Kalamazoo Gazette

Scott DeCamp

"Life on Track"

Holy cow! To get this young man to open up the way he did is a credit to the reporter.

Third Place

Traverse City Record-Eagle

Dennis Chase

"Title IX Impact"

Well done and comprehensive.

Best Sports

First Place

The Flint Journal

Eric Woodyard

"Gold: Claressa Shields Brings it Home"

The package on Claressa Shields is fantastic. Great pictures, layout and story-telling. The timeline on her boxing career was an especially nice touch. Well done.

Second Place

Traverse City Record-Eagle

"Iceman Cometh 2012"

Great planning ahead of time seems to have paid off in the execution in this job well done. Excellent photos, story and good job getting the times into the paper.

Third Place

The Flint Journal

Ross Maghielse

"State Wrestling Finals"

It's hard to make wrestling a compelling read to a wide audience. But this piece does just that.

Best Sports Column

First Place

The Muskegon Chronicle

Mark Opfermann

"Tim Flahive Retires as Basketball Official"

This is just a great column about a guy, an official, who probably got a lot more grief in his career than praise. His courage is clearly defined by the columnist.

Second Place

Lansing State Journal

Graham Couch

"Hey, No Offense, But This Just Isn't Right"

Columns can be about a lot of things, but among the best are those that take a stand and back it up. The writer does this very well in this column.

Third Place

The Flint Journal

Eric Woodyard

"Flint Legend Terry Furlow"

I really enjoyed this column. It reflects back not only on the rich history of the program, but on a player who was a big part of that and apparently has been forgotten to some degree. Good job.

Best Sustained Coverage of a Single Sports Event

First Place

Jackson Citizen Patriot

"Promise Bowl"

The staff's coverage of the renewal of this football rivalry is enterprising and ambitious. I especially liked the way the writers let real people tell the story. When you can make this kind of coverage interesting to people who have no ties to the schools, you've done your job.

Second Place

Lansing State Journal

Joe Rexrode

"2012 Olympics Jordyn Wieber"

Nice job bringing a hometown angle to an international story. The first article was particularly strong, with telling anecdotes and details about the relationship between athlete and coach and what they meant to each other.

Third Place

AnnArbor.com

"Footbrawl"

Good job staying on top of this story and using FOIA to pry open some details.

Best News Column

First Place

Traverse City Record-Eagle

Marta Hepler Drahos

"Memory Box Opens the Floodgates"

This column is simply beautiful. It connects with everyone who has lost a loved one - all of us - but doesn't pander or wallow in sentiment.

Second Place

The Flint Journal

Andrew Heller

"Sam Goes to College and Dad's Not Ready"

This deeply personal "take" from a dad on his son's pending departure to college uses a wealth of details and golden memories. Well done!

Third Place

The Muskegon Chronicle

Clayton Hardiman

"The Power of Goodwill to Transform Us is the Hope of Christmas Day"

Powerful writing and solid thinking take this column on the passing of a child beyond sentiment.

Best Breaking News

First Place

Lansing State Journal
"Labor Legacy Takes a Hit"

Impressive collection of reporting both print and online that left no angle uncovered on this major state and national story that touched the lives of many in Michigan. You have raised the bar in this category very high.

Second Place

AnnArbor.com
"Dexter Tornado"

Great developing coverage. Good news coverage and human interest angles.

Third Place

The Bay City Times
Justin Engel
"Bay County Commissioners Brawl"

Great job following this story and keeping it fresh. What could be a more timely breaking news story on election day than two opponents in a fight? Great job of digital reporting: only telling readers about this the next morning (in print) would be a shame.

Best News Picture

First Place

The Flint Journal
Ryan Garza
"Deadly Shooting on Mary Street"

Strong emotions.

Second Place

The Saginaw News
Jon Garcia
"Firefighters Enter Burning Vacant House"

Strong graphic quality in this photograph hinged on use of color to convey the hit felt by firefighters as they prepared to enter this burning building. Composition and silhouette were used effectively to draw the reader into the story presented by the photo.

Third Place

Lansing State Journal
Greg DeRuiter
"Families say Goodbye as Guard Deploys"

We've covered a lot of guard deployments but have never seen a moment where the guard member was being comforted. Making a photo like this requires a photographer to keep his eyes open and visually work what is going on in the crowd.

Best Feature Picture

First Place

AnnArbor.com

Jeffrey Smith
"Dinosaur Terror"

A moment of terror is documented as a young man is scared after coming face to face with an animated dinosaur.

Second Place

The Bay City Times

Colleen Harrison
"Haunted Temple Preparations"

A photographer demonstrated creativity and the ability to capitalize on a unique point of view in creating this ghostly atmospheric photo to illustrate the preparations for a haunted temple.

Third Place

Lansing State Journal

Rod Sanford
"Evolution of a Lansing Mosque"

Great planning won out as a photographer gained permission to photograph in a mosque, coupled with a lucky moment where a young woman expresses the joy of her worship experience.

Best Sports Picture

First Place

Jackson Citizen Patriot

Sean Proctor
"Halftime Chat"

Probing inside the nature of the game resulted in a great image from this Jackson Citizen Patriot photographer. So often we limit ourselves to action on the field. This image goes beyond the average coverage you would see from high school sports.

Second Place

Jackson Citizen Patriot

J. Scott Park
"Early Injury"

Personal defeat for a prep athlete didn't mean losing a game, but losing the opportunity to play, due to an injury.

Third Place

The Muskegon Chronicle

Nikole Hanna
"Red Card"

A controversial photo for sure, but this unusual moment asks questions about our perspective on sports and how we play the game.

Best Picture Story

First Place

Jackson Citizen Patriot

Hannah Potes
"Christopher Klavon Helps
Others Heal"

A thorough documentary work captures the life and challenges felt by the victim of a drunk driving accident. Such work brings due focus on a plague that continues to cost society lives and dollars.

Second Place

The Muskegon Chronicle

Libby March
"Electrified"

A very different story that looks at a cultural phenomena that may be unfamiliar to many. The photographer used some unique imagery to give the reader a taste of this experience.

Third Place

The Flint Journal

Ryan Garza
"Flint's Golden Girl"

A very complete and enticing reporting job telling the story of Flint's "Golden Girl."

Best Enterprise Reporting

First Place

Lansing State Journal

Kevin Grasha
"A Mountain of Obstacles"

Stunning and powerful, this entry clearly is the best in its class and may be the best entry in the entire Michigan APME contest. Well researched, eloquently written, this is a combination of journalism and storytelling that opens eyes to the genesis of crime. An outstanding must-read.

Second Place

Lansing State Journal

Kathleen Lavey
"U.P.'s Duck Lake
Blaze Aftermath"

Amazing storytelling that tells the story of a fire with the eloquence of the story of a life.

Third Place

Lansing State Journal

Steven R. Reed
"Leased Office Space in
Greater Lansing"

Strong and powerful reporting that helps set the agenda, not just follow up on it.

Best Investigative Reporting

First Place

Lansing State Journal

Lindsay VanHulle

"Bureaucratic Collapse"

When a building in a high-profile project in downtown East Lansing collapsed, Lansing State Journal reporter Lindsay VanHulle set about finding out why it happened. VanHulle shows great enterprise in spotting the potential of the story, digging up facts that make a compelling case that what happened was preventable, and holding people accountable. A great read. A strong example of investigative reporting. The clear winner.

Second Place

Kalamazoo Gazette

Julie Mack

"Schoolcraft Football Coach"

This was a very effective investigation by the newspaper of the way an official investigation was handled. The reporter did a thorough job of tracking down the story and made a strong case that the official investigation and subsequent disciplinary action had fallen short. The writing was clear, concise and compelling.

Best Public Service

First Place

Lansing State Journal

Louise Knott Ahern

"Homebirth Movement Raises

Questions of Risk"

Public service projects often aren't obvious. They are the result of diligent reporters seeing events happening in their community and wondering what the trend or the bigger picture is, and then reporting on it. This package does just that and provides interesting and important information to readers that hopefully can be used as they make decisions on how to handle future births.

Second Place

Traverse City Record-Eagle

"Rash of Sex Offenders in

Northern Michigan Schools"

Great use of the media to draw attention to a festering community problem. Great job of shining light on an important issue.

Third Place

Kalamazoo Gazette

"Debates for Kalamazoo

County Offices"

Great newspaper public service effort. Great use of both print and web elements.

Best Sustained Coverage of a Single News Event

First Place

Lansing State Journal
"Right-to-Work Protests"

Concise, solid reporting and writing on an issue that affected thousands of readers. I can't think of an angle that wasn't covered by the reporting. Each part of the entry had multiple elements to engage and draw readers in. Outstanding coverage by the State Journal.

Second Place

Lansing State Journal
Louise Knott Ahern
"Michigan Birthing Issue"

The reporting on the "news" aspect of this issue was concise, complete and included all viewpoints, but it was the compelling writing that made this stand out. You could feel the heartbreak of these families, and the passion of the center's advocates, in the way each article was written.

Third Place

Battle Creek Enquirer
"Great Lake Journey"

The writer probably had no idea a feature story would take such a tragic turn. But the strength the subject projected after being attacked was expertly conveyed through writing.