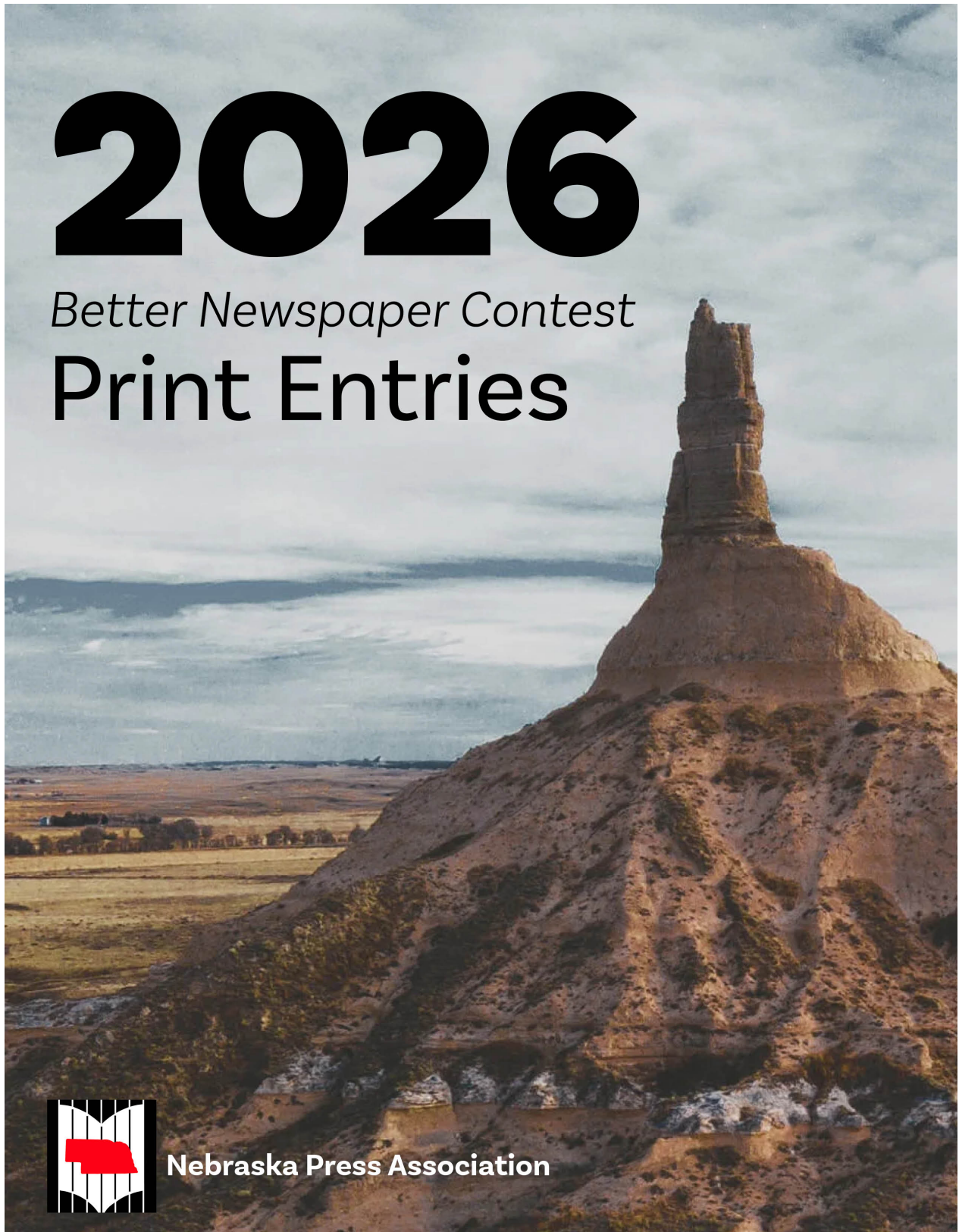


# 2026

*Better Newspaper Contest*

## Print Entries



Nebraska Press Association

# Nebraska Press Association 2026 Better Newspaper Print Contest

**Early Bird Deadline: Friday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

(All newspapers with entries submitted before midnight January 16, 2026 will be entered in a drawing for a free convention registration for that newspaper valued at: \$250)

**Regular Deadline: Friday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

## Class Divisions

### Division E

3x to 7x publication

### Division A

Weeklies 300 to 650 Circ.

### Division B

Weeklies 651 to 999 Circ.

### Division C

Weeklies 1,000 to 1,600 Circ.

### Division D

Weeklies 1,601 and Up Circ.

(according to 2025 Statements of Ownership)

## Deadlines

Entries must be entered online by **midnight Friday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026**.- Early bird deadline is midnight Friday, January 16, 2025.

## Contest Period

Calendar Year 2025. All entries must have been originally published between January 1 and December 31, 2025.

## NOTICE

Entry Fee is \$4.00 per entry from December 1-January 16; \$5 per entry from January 17-30.

Payment methods: Online payment preferred to:

<https://nebpress.com/nebraska-press-association-payment-form/>

Or, mail check to:

Nebraska Press Association

845 "S" Street

Lincoln, NE 68508

## General Rules:

1. Entries accepted only from dues-paying members. Shoppers/TMC Products are not eligible. Entries from new NPA member newspapers must be content published only from the months after they became official members.
2. Entries must be submitted to [www.newspapercontest.com/nebraska](http://www.newspapercontest.com/nebraska) by Midnight, Central time on Friday, January 30th, 2026. Follow the onscreen instructions and register using your information. You will be asked for an "Association Code", please enter **NE2026**. Please be sure to read all online rules for each category. If you need clarification of the rules, contact Lynne Lance at [lynne@nebpress.com](mailto:lynne@nebpress.com) or call 850-542-7087. All entries must be submitted online, as specified. **NO MAIL-IN ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED.**
3. Entries should be **PDF files** showing the **full page tearsheet** (publication name and date must be showing). **DO NOT SUBMIT ONLY THE PHOTO OR AD, IT MUST BE A FULL PAGE TEARSHEET.** Entries should be clearly identified by headline, topic, etc.
4. Weekly newspapers are defined as those publishing 1x or 2x per week.
5. Any class in a category that has less than 4 entries will be moved up to the next circulation class. First, second, and third place winners will be awarded in all categories having qualified entries.
6. All entries may be entered only once, regardless of publication or circulation category. (i.e., a feature story, advertisement, news photo or section may have been published in multiple newspapers, but that story, ad, photo or section cannot be entered in multiple contest categories or circulation divisions.) **A COMMON SECTION WHICH APPEARS IN MORE THAN ONE NEWSPAPER SHOULD ONLY BE ENTERED IN THE LARGEST CLASS. NO TMC/SHOPPERS ALLOWED.**
7. Individual staffers may win multiple awards in the same contest category, provided each entry is clearly marked with the staffer's name. Entry must have been created by a regular member of the newspaper staff, though not necessarily a full-time member.

8. Cover letters are not to be included with entries. Please use the comment boxes to provide information or explanations to judges.

## **SPECIAL ALL-CLASS AWARDS:**

### **(Winners receive a bonus 20 Sweepstakes points)**

**PHOTOS OF THE YEAR: NEWS, SPORTS AND FEATURE — SEE CATEGORIES 62, 63 and 64.** Only one winner statewide per category: News Photo, Sports Photo & Feature Photo. Enter your best photos and compete against the best photographs entered by weeklies & dailies in all circulation classes. Entries in the Photo of the Year categories may have also been entered in other photo categories for circulation class competition.

**EDITORIAL OF THE YEAR AWARD — SEE CATEGORY 65.** Only one winner statewide. Enter your best editorial and compete against the best entries from weeklies & dailies in all circulation classes. Entries in the Editorial of the Year category may have also been entered in Category 38 for circulation class competition.

**ADVERTISEMENT OF THE YEAR AWARD – SEE CATEGORY 66.** Only one winner statewide. Enter your best ad and compete against the best entries from weeklies and dailies in all circulation classes. Entries in the Advertisement of the Year category may have also been entered in another Ad category for circulation class competition.

## ***Daily & Weekly Contest Categories***

### **1. Use of Computer Graphics - Produced In House**

Original news graphics, created in house. Judges consider design, impact, clarity, relevance and quality of artwork. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### **2. Building Circulation**

Must be original promotional material, from your newspaper, focused on retaining readers and building circulation for either your print or digital product, or both. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### 3. Reader Interaction/Contest

Entry can consist of up to four print examples exhibiting opportunities for reader interaction or promoting a contest designed specifically to engage readers. Initiated by news, marketing, advertising, circulation or cooperative efforts. Judges shall consider potential for reader participation, originality of theme, copywriting, attractiveness and creativity. Maximum one entry per newspaper.

### 4. Newspaper Organized or Sponsored Event

Events may be self-promotional for the newspaper, community-centered, profit-generating or organized and sponsored for other reasons. Judges shall consider the event originality and creativity and benefits for participants, along with the newspaper's level of involvement and leadership. PDFs, JPGs and video formats accepted. One entry per newspaper.

## *Advertising*

**(The following applies to all Advertising Categories: NO OnePress HOUSE, AGENCY OR CLIENT PRODUCED ADS ALLOWED — ALL ADS MUST BE CREATED BY SUBMITTING NEWSPAPER)**

### 5. Community Promotion Advertisement

A single ad or series of ads created by the newspaper promoting its community, a project in its community or a community event. List name responsible for content. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### 6. Agricultural Advertisement

Best advertisement featuring an agricultural theme. Advertisement must be created by newspaper entered. Judges will consider cleverness of headlines and text and the ability to captivate, entertain and attract readers and motivate them to respond. Judges shall also consider basic idea, layout, copy, typography and originality. Must be produced in-house. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### **7. Small Ad – COLOR (Under ¼ page or less than 3 col x 10.5”)**

May submit up to three entries per newspaper. Judges will consider cleverness of headlines and text and the ability to captivate, entertain and attract readers and motivate them to respond.

Judges shall also consider basic idea, layout, copy, typography and originality. Ad must be for a single advertiser. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### **8. Small Ad – Black & White (Under ¼ page or less than 3 col x 10.5”)**

May submit up to three entries per newspaper. Judges will consider cleverness of headlines and text and the ability to captivate, entertain and attract readers and motivate them to respond.

Judges shall also consider basic idea, layout, copy, typography and originality. Ad must be for a single advertiser. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

**9. Signature Page** Best ad featuring any theme and containing multiple advertisers. Judges will consider originality of theme, design and layout, makeup, visual appeal and overall continuity. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### **10. Classified Section**

The purpose of this category is to recognize quality classified advertising pages. Judges will consider overall attractiveness, ease in reading, clarity of classified headlines, organization, promotion of classified advertising use, ease for readers to place and use classifieds. Maximum one entry per newspaper. **A COMMON SECTION WHICH APPEARS IN MORE THAN ONE NEWSPAPER SHOULD ONLY BE ENTERED IN THE LARGEST CLASS. NO TMC/SHOPPERS ALLOWED.**

### **11. Advertising Campaign**

Two or more ads constitute “campaign.” Campaign ads must be created by newspaper entered. List name of person responsible for content. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### **12. Single Ad - Color**

No house ads. Ad must be created by newspaper entered. Judges will consider cleverness of headlines and text and the ability to captivate, entertain and attract readers and motivate them

to respond. Judges shall also consider basic idea, layout, copy, typography and originality.  
Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### **13. Single Ad - Black and White**

No house ads. Ad must be created by newspaper entered. Judges will consider cleverness of headlines and text and the ability to captivate, entertain and attract readers and motivate them to respond. Judges shall also consider basic idea, layout, copy, typography and originality.  
Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### **14. Single Classified Ad - Color**

No house ads. Ad must be created by newspaper entered. Judges will consider cleverness of headlines and text and the ability to captivate, entertain and attract readers and motivate them to respond. Judges shall also consider basic idea, layout, copy, typography and originality.  
Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### **15. Single Classified Ad - Black and White**

No house ads. Ad must be created by newspaper entered. Judges will consider cleverness of headlines and text and the ability to captivate, entertain and attract readers and motivate them to respond. Judges shall also consider basic idea, layout, copy, typography and originality.  
Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### **16. Creative Ad Writing**

Each entry shall consist of three examples of creative ad writing in separate and unique advertisements. Judges will consider how the headlines and text complement artwork and other elements in the advertisements, and how the writing captures readers' attention, entertains, inspires, and prompts reader action. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

# **Sports**

## **17. Sports Action Photo**

Pictures must have been taken by a regular member of the newspaper staff, though not necessarily a full-time member. List name of photographer. Maximum seven entries per newspaper. **Entry must be full page pdf or jpg tearsheet.**

## **18. Sports Feature Photo**

Picture must have been taken by a regular member of the newspaper staff, though not necessarily a full-time member. List name of photographer. Maximum seven entries per newspaper. **Entry must be full page pdf or jpg tearsheet.**

## **19. Sports Page**

Select page or pages from one issue each of Fall, Winter, and two of the newspaper's choice. This is one entry. Judges consider content, writing, headline suitability, layout, design and appeal. Maximum one entry per newspaper.

## **20. Sports Column**

Submit any two columns per columnist. Columns must be regular features, original, written by a regular member of the staff. Judges consider the purpose of the column, local interest, selection of material, literary merit. List name of columnist. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

## **21. Sports Feature Writing**

This category is for a single sports story where the focus is not on a specific game or contest (though specific contests may be mentioned and part of the story). For example, the story may feature a particular athlete or coach, a season overview, a state tournament run, a change in a team's philosophy or strategy, etc. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

## **22. Sports Game Coverage**

Enter a single story that covers a single athletic contest. The focus of the story should be on the game play. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

# *Photography*

## **23. Photo Page**

Pictures must have been taken by a regular member of the newspaper staff, though not necessarily a full-time member. Judges consider the theme, composition of individual photos, local interest, layout, reproduction, captions. A premium for originality. Maximum seven entries per newspaper. **Entry must be full page pdf or jpg tearsheet.**

## **24. Feature Photography**

Pictures must have been taken by a regular member of the newspaper staff, though not necessarily a full-time member. List name of photographer. Maximum seven entries per newspaper. **Entry must be full page pdf or jpg tearsheet.**

## **25. News Photography**

Pictures must have been taken by a regular member of the newspaper staff, though not necessarily a full-time member. List name of photographer. Maximum seven entries per newspaper. **Entry must be full page pdf or jpg tearsheet.**

## **26. Breaking News Photography**

Pictures must have been taken by a regular member of the newspaper staff, though not necessarily a full-time member. Breaking News is defined as a photo in which no advance planning is possible...tornadoes...accidents...fires...quick action items. Maximum seven entries per newspaper. **Entry must be full page pdf or jpg tearsheet.**

# *News/Editorial*

## **27. Use of Color — News**

Judges consider originality, compatibility with written matter, makeup. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

## 28. Personal Column

Submit any two columns per columnist. Each columnist limited to one entry. Columns must be regular features, original, written by a regular member of the staff. Judges consider the purpose of the column, local interest, selection of material, literary merit. List name of columnist. Entry shall consist of any two columns per columnist. Maximum seven entries per newspaper.

## 29. Breaking News

Breaking News is defined as an event or development in which no advance planning is possible...tornadoes...accidents...fires...quick-action items. Judges consider interest, thoroughness, clarity of writing and impact of visual elements and presentation. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

## 30. Feature Series

The Feature Series must have appeared in two or more issues. Judges consider subject, interest and impact, layout and design, writing. **(Don't confuse with contest No. 31)**. Maximum three entries.

## 31. Single Feature Story

Judges consider subject, interest and impact, writing. **(Don't confuse with contest No. 30)**. List name of writer. Maximum of four feature entries per newspaper.

## 32. Feature Story – PROFILE

This category recognizes excellence in feature writing that specifically profiles a person or a group of people. To be judged on effectiveness of writing style, originality of approach and human interest. Entries limited to one per individual or team, with maximum of three entries per newspaper.

## 33. Preserving Local History – Story

Entries in this category may be a story or stories that celebrate the history of your community. Entries will be judged on the quality of writing and construction of the article, human interest and appeal to reader interest. Directly related sidebars may be considered where a single story in one issue is submitted. Maximum of three entries per newspaper.

### 34. Entertainment Story

Previews, reviews and coverage of arts, crafts, theater, music, festivals, restaurants, fairs, etc. Judges shall consider reader interest, creativity and the total impact of writing, photography, layout and digital elements. Entry shall consist of the entrant's reporting on a single subject or event from one publication. PDFs, JPGs and video formats accepted. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### 35. In-depth Writing

An in-depth report on a serious subject, single or multiple elements or a series. Judges consider news peg, local relevance, use of research, computer-aided research, multiple sources, enterprise on the part of the newspaper in pulling resources together to get the story, impact on community, opportunity for the community to take action. Maximum two entries per newspaper.

**NOTE: The first, second, and third-place winners in all divisions of the In-Depth Writing category of the NPA Better Newspaper Contest will automatically compete for the A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism in Nebraska, which includes cash awards of \$5,000, \$3,000, and \$2,000. To qualify for the A-Mark Prize, submissions must include a 300- to 500-word letter detailing the background, scope and actual or potential impact of the reporting. As a result, participants in the In-Depth Writing category have the option to submit this letter along with their entries, ensuring the winners are prepared for consideration for the A-Mark Prize.**

This letter will not be considered by judges for the NPA Better Newspaper Contest.

### 36. Public Notice and Its Promotion

Submit any two examples of staff-written articles, editorials or ads which promote the concept of newspaper public notice as the best way to guarantee the public's right to know. This is one entry. Maximum of one entry. **THIS CATEGORY COUNTS DOUBLE POINTS FOR SWEEPSTAKES AWARD.**

### **37. Editorial Page**

Submit digital versions of three issues, one from the months of April, one from August, and one from a month of your choice. Judges consider power of original editorial matter, layout, design, information, reader participation and local relevance. Maximum one entry per newspaper.

### **38. Editorial**

Entry shall consist of three staff-originated editorials. This is one entry. Judges consider local interest in issues raised, suggested solutions and call to action. Judges also consider clearness of style, sound reasoning, power to influence public opinion and literary merit. Maximum one entry per newspaper.

### **39. News Writing**

Judges consider the quality of writing....its impact, clarity of sourcing, thoroughness and relevance. Entry consists of story dealing with general news coverage. One entry per topic, any number of staff members may contribute to the story. Maximum of three entries per newspaper.

### **40. Headline Writing**

Submit one from date of your choice. Enter entire page as entry. Judges consider the effectiveness of headlines in capturing reader interest and in accurately reflecting the nature of stories. Maximum one entry per newspaper.

### **41. Front Page**

Submit one front page from date of your choice. Enter entire front page as entry. Judges consider layout and design, writing, use of artwork, headlines, relevance, balance of local and non-local coverage. Maximum three entries per newspaper.

### **42. General Excellence**

This is one of the top awards in the NPA Better Newspaper Contest, an overall evaluation of the newspaper. Submit digital versions of three issues, one from May, one from October and the third to be a consecutive issue to one of the above. Judges consider news, content, quality of writing, headlines, page design, photos and captions, graphics and art elements, editorial page, front page, lifestyle pages, sports pages, reproduction, advertising design and content,

treatment of public notices. Maximum one entry per newspaper. PUT ALL FILES IN ONE PDF FILE.

### **43. Special Single Section**

Each entry consists of one section on a single date of publication per newspaper. Judges consider best idea, editorial content, photo and art content, layout, impact on community. No OnePress sponsored sections. Maximum three entries per newspaper. "By Staff" byline acceptable on this category. **A COMMON SECTION WHICH APPEARS IN MORE THAN ONE NEWSPAPER SHOULD ONLY BE ENTERED IN THE LARGEST CLASS. NO TMC/SHOPPERS ALLOWED.** PUT ALL FILES IN ONE PDF FILE.

### **44. Special Section (Multiple Publication Days)**

Each entry consists of section on multiple dates of publication per newspaper. Judges consider best idea, editorial content, photo and art content, layout, impact on community. No OnePress sponsored sections. Maximum three entries per newspaper. "By Staff" byline acceptable on this category. **A COMMON SECTION WHICH APPEARS IN MORE THAN ONE NEWSPAPER SHOULD ONLY BE ENTERED IN THE LARGEST CLASS. NO TMC/SHOPPERS ALLOWED.** PUT ALL FILES IN ONE PDF FILE.

### **45. Youth Coverage**

Submit three examples of coverage of young people (full-page tearsheets of youth pages, opinions, in-depth series about issues facing young people, advertisements, special sections, etc.) with subject matter clearly outlined. This will be one entry. Judges will consider local interest, relevance, impact and ingenuity. Maximum one entry per newspaper. PUT ALL FILES IN ONE PDF FILE.

### **46. Specialty/Lifestyles Sections**

Submit tearsheets from regular editions of up to three examples of specialty/lifestyle pages or sections geared to a specific audience, or three examples geared to a variety of audiences: youth, business, agriculture, seniors, etc. Judges consider page design, impact, relevance of content. Maximum one entry per newspaper. PUT ALL FILES IN ONE PDF FILE.

## ***Leadership Awards***

(Winners receive a bonus 20 Sweepstakes points)

### **47. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AWARD (All Classes Together)**

Only one winner. Submit news articles, editorials, house ads and other materials demonstrating your newspaper's commitment to combating government secrecy and ensuring the public's right to know. Entry can include cover letter from entrant and supporting letters from the community.

PUT ALL FILES IN ONE PDF FILE.

### **48. BEST NIE PROGRAM**

One entry per newspaper accompanied by cover letter explaining how your publication promotes Newspapers in Education. Samples can include full-page tearsheets of promotional advertisements, specialty pages or sections aimed at student readers, copies of fliers or letters sent to teachers, etc. Subject matter should be clearly outlined. Judges will consider ingenuity and impact of promotional materials and ads, and results of efforts. Maximum one entry per newspaper. PUT ALL FILES IN ONE PDF FILE. Note: NPA's Kid Scoop News material not eligible.

**(See Categories 49 thru 61 in the Digital Contest Rules)**

## ***Special All-Class Awards***

(Winners receive a bonus 20 Sweepstakes points)

Note: Photographs in categories Nos. 62, 63 and 64 must have been taken by a regular member of the newspaper staff, though not necessarily a full-time member. List name of photographer.

## 62. News Photo of the Year

Newspapers may enter one photo in this category, which will compete against all weeklies and dailies in all circulation classes. Submit entry online as per other photo category instructions. Entry must be a full-page PDF or JPG tearsheet. Entries for this category may have also been entered in Photo Categories 24 or 25, although an entry in this Category (62) will be considered a separate entry. **Maximum one entry per newspaper.**

## 63. Sports Photo of the Year

Newspapers may enter one photo in this category, which will compete against all weeklies and dailies in all circulation classes. Submit entry online as per other photo category instructions. Entry must be a full-page PDF or JPG tearsheet. Entries for this category may have also been entered in Photo Categories 17 or 18, although an entry in this Category (63) will be considered a separate entry. **Maximum one entry per newspaper.**

## 64. Feature Photo of the Year

Newspapers may enter one photo in this category, which will compete against all weeklies and dailies in all circulation classes. Submit entry online as per other photo category instructions. Entry must be a full-page PDF or JPG tearsheet. Entries for this category may have also been entered in Photo Category 24, although an entry in this Category (64) will be considered a separate entry. **Maximum one entry per newspaper.**

## 65. Editorial of the Year

Newspapers may submit one entry in this category consisting of a single editorial, which will compete against all weeklies and dailies in all circulation classes. Submit entry online. Entries for this category may have also been entered in Editorial Category 38, although an entry in this Category (65) will be considered a separate entry. **Maximum one entry per newspaper.**

## 66. Advertisement of the Year

Newspapers may submit one entry in this category consisting of a single ad, which will compete against all weeklies and dailies in all circulation classes. Submit entry online.

Entries for this category may have also been entered in other Advertising Categories, although an entry in this Category (66) will be considered a separate entry. **Maximum one entry per newspaper.**

# ***Print Sweepstakes Awards***

## **Weekly Class Awards**

All **weekly** newspapers entered are automatically eligible. The award will be presented to the newspaper in each class of A, B, C and D that accumulates the most points in its class based on the formula given below.

## **Weekly Sweepstakes Award (Publish 1x-2x per week)**

All **weekly** newspapers entered are automatically eligible. This is the most prestigious award in the weekly competition. The award will be presented to the newspaper that accumulates the most points based on the formula given below.

## **Daily Sweepstakes Award (Publish 3x or more per week)**

All **DIVISION E** newspapers entered are automatically eligible. This is the most prestigious award in the daily competition. The award will be presented to the newspaper that accumulates the most points based on the following formula:

Each first place award...10 points\*

Each second place award...8 points\*

Each third place award...6 points\*

\*Double points for General Excellence & Public Notice categories

**Twenty** Sweepstakes points will also be awarded for Freedom of Information, Best NIE Program & Special All-Class Awards: News Photo of the Year; Sports Photo of the Year; Feature Photo of the Year; Editorial of the Year; and, Advertisement of the Year

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