

2003
Weekly Editorial
NJPA Better Newspaper Contest Results

Overall Awards, Journalist of the Year

Weekly

"Illegal Immigrants"

Clare Marie Celano

The News Transcript, Freehold, Greater Media Newspapers

Judges comments: A totally compelling look at the other side of an inflammatory issue that readers rarely, if ever, get to observe. Celano expertly steps out of the way and simply tells what she sees at the immigrant's 'residences' in the woods and at the dilapidated, 'illegal' apartment. In doing so, the reader sees the bleak, desolate life that immigrants live as they seek, and most often fail to find, a better life for themselves and their loved ones back home.

She skillfully chooses to introduce the plight of illegal immigrants through the shattered dream of one nearly anonymous dead man whose family back home is today deprived of a husband and father and left deep in debt from his failed bid for a better life in a land of freedom and plenty.

Here stories are compelling, revealing, sad, enlightening, infuriating. Her simple reporting exposes the bigotry of a self-absorbed, fearful and angry community and unmasks the compassion and hard work of one tireless, beleaguered sympathizer, a local Hispanic language newspaper publisher.

Missing from the story: I'd like to have heard the voices of those found living illegally in the dilapidated apartment and in the woods and those who pick them up off the street and give them day work (and exploit them).

A fine, fine job.

Overall Awards

General Excellence, Weekly, over 4,500

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Overall Awards

General Excellence, Weekly, under 4,500

South Brunswick Post, Dayton, Packet Publications

W-01 Responsible Journalism

Public Service, Lloyd P. Burns Memorial Award

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Community Wrestles with Immigration"

Clare Marie Celano

News Transcript, Freehold, Greater Media Newspapers

Second Place

"Making Ends Meet"

Angela G. King and Alicia Zadrozny

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Montclair Seceding From Essex County"

Mark S. Porter, Alicia Zadrozny and Jeff Harrell

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Judges Comments – None available

W-01 Responsible Journalism

Public Service, Lloyd P. Burns Memorial Award

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Uncertainties Panic Tenants ..."

Christine Hintze

The Nutley Sun, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Pockets of Need"

Rebecca Tokarz, Hank Kalet and John Saccenti

South Brunswick Post, Dayton, Packet Publications

Third Place

"Residents Worry About Their Block"

Dan Burns

Spectator Leader, Union, Worrall Community Newspapers

Judges Comments – First Place – Ms. Hintze dedicated both indirect and direct pieces that correlated with local tenants debacle in facing their future living conditions. She interviewed multiple sources from tenants to city officials to business owners, all with various aspects at stake. Her reporting was objective and clear. She articulated a rather boring subject matter to the common man and was able to relate the importance of lower income housing and the struggles many Americans face throughout the nation. The local angle was covered extensively and her follow-up reporting was a direct force in initiating debate.

Second Place – Reporters committed a series of pieces relating to the local needs of a food pantry and charity. Writing was direct and to the point and served the public reader with information on actual needs and contacts. Ms. Tokarz's reporting was mainly information, however, she wove facts of the community's overall needs regarding charity. She also included the trend of giving throughout the year, something many of us do not realize unless it's an important holiday. Future needs

were examined and suggestions given for those interested in contributing to the welfare of the community during the “off season”.

Third Place – Energetic and innovative in resources through self-observance, police reports and residents. Good lead. Story is the root of possible larger issue, including the gangs and drug rings. Mr. Burns appears to be young at the craft of new writing, but his energetic tone and willingness to explore alternative sources will serve him well as he matures as a reporter.

W-02 Responsible Journalism

Editorial Comment

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Blemish Mars Friendly Face of Rocky Hill" and "Art Council is Victimized by Town's History"

Rick Sinding

The Princeton Packet, Packet Publications

Second Place

"Ask Mr. Difference" and "Denounce, Demonstrate, Delegitimize"

Andrew Silow-Carroll

New Jersey Jewish News, Whippany

Third Place

"Hard Won Battles" and "Malpractice Crisis"

Doris Kulman

The Two River Times, Red Bank

Judges comments – There is no lack of courageous comment or important topics with this batch of entries. But the pitfall of writing editorials is a dull earnestness. And that’s what these winners avoided, substituting good writing for the eyes-glaze-over pose, so typical of the category. I particularly enjoyed Andrew’s humorous format - Ask Mr. Difference – and all 3 of the winners gave a good read as well as taking important stands.

W-02 Responsible Journalism

Editorial Comment

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Provide Equality" and "Skewed Feedback"

David Learn

The Clark Eagle, Worrall Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Board Members Not Out of Line With Comments" and "Mayor Patten..."

Mark Moffa

Windsor Hights-Herald, Hightstown, Packet Publications

Third Place

"Marc Moran Story" and "Elected Officials"

Ruth Luse
Hopewell Valley News, Packet Publications

Judges comments – First Place – Not only did this editorial writer hold officials accountable, but he also offered reasonable solutions. That's great use of editorial space.

Second Place – A strong voice for the community.

Third Place – It's all about accountability – for government and citizens.

W-03 Responsible Journalism

Enterprise

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Village Suspends Supervisor ..."

Kathleen Dubill

The Ridgewood News, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Domestic Security Plan Braces Court"

Jim Edwards

New Jersey Law Journal, Newark

Third Place

"Kidding Around vs. Sexual Harrassment"

Christopher South

Ocean City Sentinel, Sample Media, Inc.

Judges comments – The mark of a good enterprise story is that it leads to bigger issues. I was impressed with how Ms. Dobill's reporting went on to uncover many instances of ethical and professional misconduct. Because of her work, the community benefited in the long run. This category had a wide range of entries, but among them the work of Tim Edward's and Christopher South stood out as examples of strong, dedicated reporting. Both their stories required extensive use of contacts and were very well written.

W-03 Responsible Journalism

Enterprise

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"State Fights Plan," "Wounded Bill" and "State Fights Feds"

Phil Garber

Mt. Olive Chronicle, Chester, Recorder Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Leigh Byron"

Rebecca Tokarz

South Brunswick Post, Dayton, Packet Publications

Third Place

"Residents Demand Legal Action" and "Home Field Disadvantage"
Christine Hintze
Belleville Times, Nutley, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Judges comments – First Place – Phil Garber wrote these pieces as I'd expect from the Washington Post. Tight, smooth writing – easily read even though filled with tough to condense subjects and difficult to deal with language. It felt like Garber had a team feeding him the info, but doubt that was so in this category.

Second Place – Rebecca and the Post did the leg work to get “the goods” before an appointment was made – wish we'd done that before our school board hired the last bozo they did for superintendent of schools. Good work!

Third Place – Huge kudos to Christine Hintze for her digging – this didn't just produce a good story, but should help get a terrible situation resolved. Here instincts were right on the mark, with a little editing help she'll be first next time.

W-04, Reporting, Writing and Illustration

News Writing

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Outside Influence?"

Tom Jennemann

The Hoboken Reporter, Hudson Reporter Associates

Second Place

"Welcome to Clifton"

Brian Spadora

Clifton Journal, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Bootleggers Beleaguer Farm Market Operators"

Scott Morgan

The Register-News, Bordentown, Packet Publications

Judges comments – The vast majority of the entries were of the cops/courts variety...fires, police reports, courtroom reporting. I found it very hard to distinguish between them. Inverted pyramid leads, all the same official sources (prosecutors, police chiefs, etc.) All decent, but all exactly alike. Some of them include little notes to tell me “This story came in an hour before deadline,” or “I had to call the prosecutor five times to get this story.” I didn't take that into consideration at all. Every writer works on deadline, but not everyone included a note to tell me about it. To be fair, I judged the journalism independent of how long it took to produce.

In selecting the winners, I looked for the reporter to take me beyond the same old official sources. The winning story was unique in all my entries because the reporter was able to explain how power works, not just tell me what happened or who said that. I learned something specific, not just a “balanced” list of quotes. The losing stories all

told me what happened or who said what, but the First Place story told me what it means. Anyone can get the facts. I want to know what they MEAN.

I chose the second and third place stories because they showed some reporter enterprise...the reporter got out on the street and talked to regular people about their lives, with the second place story being a little more ambitious than the third. The winners didn't just ring up the same old official sources and quote the same old party lines. All that stuff is predictable and meaningless. When you talk to real people, who knows what they'll say?

W-04 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

News Writing

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Man Bares All to Priest on Bridge"

Audrey Davie

Citizen of Morris County, Denville, Recorder Community Newspapers

Second Place

"It's Not TV, It's BOE"

Michael Perrota

Bloomfield Life, Nutley, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Native Sons Charged with Fatal Fire"

George Danco

Florham Park Eagle, Madison, Recorder Community Newspapers

Judges comments – The quality of all entries in general were great. Readability was superb. I chose the first and second place winners because they had something above and beyond the other entries – they were bursting with reader interest. First place was a case of being in the right (or wrong!) place at the right time and using this to the paper's advantage – very resourceful! Second place obviously beat out the competition by taking the time to transcribe the event and get all the facts. Third place was very thorough and didn't leave me with lingering questions like some of the other entries. Very complete!

W-05 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Coverage of Government-Art Weissman Memorial Award

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Borough Fights Attempt By Club to be Tax-exempt"

Jennifer Potash

The Princeton Packet, Packet Publications

Second Place

"Lawns Renovations Meet Zoning Board Resistance"

Kathleen Dubill

The Ridgewood News, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"In Graft Probe, It's Mayor vs. Mayor"

Jim Edwards

New Jersey Law Journal, Newark

Judges comments – First Place – A stand out among standouts. Potash presents well-written, well-researched stories on a variety of topics. The “tax-exempt” story in this entry and the “McMansions” from a second entry were both fantastic and the kind of news readers want and deserve to see. Her employer is lucky to have such a talent and should watch to make sure she’s not stolen away by the competition. Other reporters can look at any of the six stories she submitted (two separate entries) for ideas to apply in their own community. From taxes to development and from local to state government, she covers it all with an easily digestible style. The time line on the Palmer Square story and the info-box with the tax story, great additions that often get overlooked or even left out, are just small elements of what separates these entries from the rest. Although part of the second entry, her McMansions piece wonderfully highlighted a contradiction found in many local governments that support affordable housing in theory yet find some way to not promote it in practice. It takes time and patience, not to mention persistence, to develop sources and cultivate a beat like this and Potash seems to have pulled it off masterfully. Bravo and congratulations.

Second Place – What a great idea that is superbly executed. Dubill’s series on the minutia of a local zoning code and how the average Joe Citizen can maneuver through the maze of bureaucracy is the reason this sort of category exists. It’s not really breaking news, and it’s more than a feature. It’s news you can use. Too often government reporting just becomes coverage of meetings and elections. But as this series details, it really can be much more than that. Dubill should be commended for not only taking the time to understand the intricacies of zoning (which every reporter should do if they haven’t), but also for taking it a step further by translating it into something the average reader can understand.

Third Place – Edwards writes cleanly with a zippy style that truly engages the reader. Each of the pieces was thoroughly researched adding a layer of context most people don’t get from their daily newspaper. The juicy subject matter doesn’t hurt either in this case.

Edwards does such a good job delving into issues that pique the interest of people who care about what’s going on underneath the shiny crust of elected government – “Teflon Contractor” a great example.

W-05 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

**Coverage of Government-Art Weissman Memorial Award
Weekly, under 4,500**

First Place

"Licitra Behavior Attacked"

Phil Garber
Mt. Olive Chronicle, Chester, Recorder Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Left Behind"

Christine Hintze
The Nutley Sun, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Windy Bush Dangerous Intersection"

Linda Seida
The Beacon, Lambertville, Packet Publications

Judges comments – First Place – The three stories looking into alleged misconduct on the part of Mayor Zicitra are well researched and in-depth. The reporter obviously did his homework. I would have liked to see more quotes higher in the stories but they are easy to read. The material is sensitive and the reporter should be commended on his ability to tackle the subject.

Second Place – Great job in bringing local attention to a national issue. The writer puts the spotlight on the gaps in Bush's plan so that the reader can easily understand. She also discusses the damage the "no child left behind act" could have on the special educational students and the progress that group has already made. Only think I saw needed was to shorten the long sentences.

Third Place – The writer began covering the needed reduction of speed limit on a dangerous road. She brought in the local angle beautifully and told how the board pawned responsibility off on the DOT. The speed limit was eventually reduced and even a 4-way intersection was put in. After The Beacon began running stories about this road, other media and state officials joined in the fight. The supervisors were happy with the end result.

W-06 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Interpretive Writing

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Second to None" and "The Passing of Larry Doby"

Darren Cooper, Angela G. King and Mark S. Porter
The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Marshall's Lawyer Defends His Defense"

Henry Gottlieb
New Jersey Law Journal, Newark

Third Place

"Historic Home Demolition Trend"

W. Jacob Perry
The Bernardsville News, Recorder Community Newspapers

Judges comments – Priority was given to entries that grabbed my attention with good leads and held my attention with a readable style, plenty of information, well-placed quotations, good effort and an economy of words. Unfortunately, this category seems to be a catch-all for a number of categories your association does not have in its contest – including education reporting, series of news stories, environmental reporting, etc.

Writing on the first and second place winners was especially strong and thorough. Third place, although the quality of writing slipped, showed great effort and provided the most compelling topic, I felt. Good work, all.

W-06 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Interpretive Writing

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Railroad Reactivation Series"

Toniann Antonelli

The Leader of Kenilworth and Roselle Park, Union, Worrall Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Police, Fire Contracts Remain in Arbitration"

Rick Klittich

Echo Leader, Union, Worrall Community Newspapers

Third Place

"The Battle Over Windsor Farm"

Cynthia Koons

The Messenger-Press, Hightstown, Packet Publications

Judges comments – First Place – excellent in-depth look at a different topic. Good coverage of community attitude.

Second Place – excellent job integrating both sides of debate on a subject that is critical to a community & health.

Third Place – This is a lovely, nostalgic report of an emotional issue that's clearly important to the readers of your paper.

W-07 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Feature Writing

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Beyond Organic," "Local Actions" and "It's About Taste"

Amy Brummer

The Princeton Packet, Packet Publications

Second Place

"Hamilton House Haunted?"

Daniel Prochilo

Clifton Journal, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Florence Soldier Back from Iraq"

Scott Morgan

The Register News, Hightstown, Packet Publications

Judges comments – In judging this category, I was looking for writing style, a strong lead sentence followed by good introductory paragraphs, seamless transitions, fresh word images, sentences that weren't overly long, and attention-grabbing story ideas. Overall, most of the entries were weak in these areas. Many leaned toward being "straight news" stories, rather than feature stories. That said, the first place story was researched and written well and it easily rose to the top of the pile, though hopefully the writer will continue to develop more of an individual style. The second place story was interesting and readable and it was less "newsy" than many of the other entries. The subject of the third-place story was rather commonplace but the writer injected it with some personality.

W-07 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Feature Writing

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Lawrence Family Remembers Their Son-in-law"

Steve Feitl

The Lawrence Ledger, Lawrenceville, Packet Publications

Second Place

"The Miracle 6-year-old Boy"

Josh Saltzman

The Cranford Eagle, Worrall Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Creativity Pays for City Teacher"

Dan Burns

Spectator Leader, Union, Worrall Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Fathers, Sons and William Franklin Middle School"

Nicholas Moore

Bloomfield Life, Nutley, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Judges comments: First Place – a well-written story, but perhaps too many quotes. Some could have been summarized for brevity and clarity.

Second Place – The characters could have been more well rounded. They weren't well described, so I didn't care as much about them as I should have.

Third Place – This story was told about as well as it could have been told, but it lacked the same creative spark that the teacher used.

W-08 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Column (serious)

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Everyone Cane Go To The 'Best' College" and "The Twinkling of an Eye"

Elizabeth S. Ludas

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Should Christians Dance?" and "Blessings of Coffee Hour"

Tim Bond

Hunterdon County Democrat, Flemington, NJN Publishing

Third Place

"Our Self-Serving Legislators and "Not in Our Best Interests"

Martin L. Haines

New Jersey Law Journal, Newark

Judges comments: none available

W-08 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Column (serious)

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Community Spirit Alive in Woodglenn" and "Jim Meert Leaving Central Football"

Lowell Mills Snare

Hunterdon Review, Lebanon, Recorder Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Why Not Give Your Lungs a Second Chance" and "Make the County Answer To Its Constituents"

Tom Canavan

The Leader of Kenilworth & Roselle Park, Worrall Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Back to Plains, GA" and "With Hillary"

Mike Condon

Roxbury Register, Chester, Recorder Community Newspapers

Judges comments: First Place – strong writing style gives topics mass appeal to entire community combines news & feature elements.

Second Place – Takes on difficult topics with direct and unsentimental frankness and demands accountability.

Third Place – Takes readers where they may not go themselves and gives them insight – well done.

W-09 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Column (humorous)

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"All That Glitters"

Elizabeth S. Ludas

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Trying On Some Lives"

Siobhan Hanly

Hunterdon County Democrat, Flemington, NJN Publishing

Third Place

"Logging in ... Digesting Spam"

Eveline Speedie

The Item of Millburn and Short Hills, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Judges comments: All entrants did a fabulous job on a wide range of subjects. The ones we choose to honor as winners were just a little better than the others. Congratulations to the winners.

W-09 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Column (humorous)

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"When do the Indoor Sports Start?"

Daniel Murphy

Record-Press, Westfield, NJN Publishing

Second Place

"Do Not Speak Unless Spoken To"

Daniel Murphy

Cranford Chronicle, NJN Publishing

Third Place

"Perceptions"

Steve Feitl

The Lawrence Ledger, Lawrenceville, Packet Publications

Judges comments – Some of the best column writing I have read in a long time. Great job!

W-10 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Sports Writing Portfolio

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

Bill Tooker

Hunterdon County Democrat, Flemington, NJN Publishing

Second Place

Doug McKenzie

The Independent, Middletown, Greater Media Newspapers

Third Place

Andrew Griffin

The Coast Star, Manasquan, Coast Star Newspapers

Judges comments: none available

W-10 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Sports Writing Portfolio

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

Neil Hay

Windsor Hights-Herald, Hightstown, Packet Publications

Second Place

Dan Murphy

Record-Press, Clark, NJN Publishing

Third Place

Rudy Brandl

Hillsborough Beacon, Packet Publications

Judges comments – In general, the entries in this newspaper category display writing that is competent beyond expectations for papers this small. There are many examples of energy, creativity and thoroughness that make for solid, interesting reporting.

There is also a lot of variety of subject matter in this group reflecting New Jersey's fascination with sports of all sorts including lifeguard competitions, crew, field hockey and boxing. It's a little different here in the rural south where football, basketball and baseball still reign. Your sports writers are fortunate to have such diversity.

The three writers I thought worked their turf the best from what I read were as follows:

First Place – Neil Hay does well what community newspapers do best, connect the past with the present. His two hall of fame induction stories and the advance on the big 100-year-old football rivalry between Peddie and Blair all draw from the memories of former competitors to frame the exploits of the current generation's stars. These pieces were well written, well organized and interesting for both the contrasts and similarities of the different times. And they would have been appreciated by readers of more than one generation.

Second Place – A first person hands on sparring experience with former boxing great Gerry Cooney leaves readers with a sense of the rawness of the sport both from the physical punishment it administers and the sparseness and isolation of the local boxing club environment. A standout Rutgers football player who also carries a 4.0 grade

average is a good interview choice nicely written that gives the readers hope for a sport increasingly riddled with scandal.

Third Place – Brandi reminds us that good sports writing doesn't require exotic subject matter or flamboyant personalities as a catalyst. His entry of three different high school games (football, field hockey and soccer) was consistently well written and, as importantly, displayed a solid knowledge of the sports he covers. The stories included the language of the games without being overly clichéd and were interspersed with appropriate quotes from players and coaches. I would guess the athletic community in the paper's coverage area has confidence in him.

W-11 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Robert P. Kelly Award

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Riding the Supper Circuit and "Grieving Mother Spreads OxyContin Alert"

Brandon Wall

Hunterdon County Democrat, Flemington, NJN Publishing

Second Place

"Rallying in the Rain for Hasan's Family" and "Parent, Chant, Plead For Principals Return"

Tara Petersen

Sentinel, Freehold, Greater Media Newspapers

Third Place

"Segars is NJ's No. 1 Defender" and "Village Suspends Supervisor"

Kathleen Dubill

The Ridgewood News, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Judges comments – First Place – reporter showed skill with both news and feature article and both stories were terrific. Great use of language to convey the “feelings” associated with two very different kinds of stories. (I wanted to taste the roast beef!)

Second Place – diverse stories – showed ability to do both feature and news. Answered all the reader's questions. Excellent use of quotes (you resisted the urge to make it sound like a laundry list of quotes with your prudent use of the word “said”).

Third Place – a little choppy (work on transitions), but great info and nice concrete images. Be sure to double check grammar and spelling – errors can distract from an otherwise great story. Nice job.

W-11 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Robert P. Kelly Award

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Twists, Turns" and "Husband Held"

Matt Doherty

The Randolph Reporter, Chester, Recorder Community Newspapers

Second Place

"With No Options, All You Can Do Is Pray!" and "Police: Mom Killed Son"

David Pescatore

Windsor Hights-Herald, Hightstown, Packet Publications

Third Place

"Lieutenant Recalls Time Of Action" and "Council, Accused of Illegal Meeting"

Sarah Winkelman

Windsor Hights-Herald, Hightstown, Packet Publications

Judges comments – First Place – strong writing style, clear, gets to the point. Good descriptions; for example “flex their majority muscle”; complete stories. Writes like a seasoned reporter. Talent plus!

Second Place – good interviewer – flowing style, good research.

Third Place – Good mix of showing strong style – council story significant – good to see multiple sources.

W-12 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Arts & Entertainment Writing

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Liss Shares Daughter's Memories in New Book"

Debra Winters

Today Newspapers, Wayne, North Jersey Community Newspapers

First Place

"Writer Forever Linked to Unchained Melody"

Linda DeNicola

Tri-Town News, Freehold, Greater Media Newspapers

Second Place

"Hunting and Gathering - How the Montclair Art Museum Acquires Art"

Teresa Akersten

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Shooting Whales For Their Own Good"

Gloria Stravelli

Atlanticville, Long Branch, Greater Media Newspapers

Judges comments – First Place (Tri-Town News) outstanding writing! Great use of quotes. More, more like this!

First Place (Today Newspapers) – Moe Liss's tragic loss of his daughter hits the heart and makes the reader want to buy the book. The reporter gives enough information to entice the reader without giving the whole story away.

Second Place – Authoritative reporting, good professional style, and great treatment of subject – could be in a major daily!

Third Place – Superb writing – turned a so-so assignment into exciting writing.

W-12 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Arts & Entertainment Writing

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Local Personalities Marc & Mike Take to the Air, to Keep it Fair"

Richard Dickon

Belleville Times, Nutley, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Mystic Visions' 'Lost in Yonkers' is an Entrancing Piece of Theater"

Bea Smith

The Leader, Union, Worrall Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Lawrence Childhood Plays Out on Canvas"

Jim Green

The Lawrence Ledger, Lawrenceville, Packet Publications

Judges comments – First Place – Nicely written. Enough information provided on Lawrence to make the reader crave more.

Second Place - A new twist on reviews by giving examples of their show the reporter tells the reader why they should want to listen. Nice balance and easy to read and follow.

Third Place – The detail in this review makes the reader visualize. Colorfully written.

W-13 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Special Subject Writing

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Traveling in the Future's Fast Lanes"

Gwen McNamara

The Princeton Packet, Packet Publications

Second Place

"Series on Eating Disorders"

Deb Dawson

Hunterdon County Democrat, Flemington, NJN Publishing

Third Place

"End of Pown's" and "Service Station An Apt Term"

Gloria Stravelli

The Hub, Long Branch, Greater Media Newspapers

Judges comments – First Place – Incredibly well documented. Authoritative – both sides well presented. Local, local, local, great work. Good, clear writing.

Second Place – 3-story captures reality of growing problem. Local tie-in with national stats effective. Makes you want to cry. Good writing and good strong writing ability.

Third Place – knows how to tell a story. Captured the essence of small business struggles.

W-13 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Special Subject Writing

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Seniors React to driver Testing for Seniors" and "Freedom to Drive is Freedom Itself"

Cynthia Koons

The Messenger-Press, Allentown, Packet Publications

Second Place

"Fowling it Up On the Field"

David Learn

The Clark Eagle, Worrall Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Share the Dream"

Josh Saltzman

The Clark Eagle, Worrall Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Student Overcomes Stereotypes"

Jim Green

The Lawrence Ledger, Lawrenceville, Packet Publications

Judges comments – First Place – very well done – facts well researched but writing and quotes tells the human story. Good writing style, appeals to all ages.

Second Place – great writing – descriptions make reader “feel” this story.

Third Place (tie) – both stories well written. Green could use more sources.

W-14 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Graphics & Illustration

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"The Year in Review"

Jaimie Julia Winters and Glenn Garvie

South Bergenite, Rutherford, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Teen Gambling"

Karen L. Kesten
Independent, Freehold, Greater Media Newspapers

Third Place

"225th Anniversary of Monmouth"

Karen L. Kesten
News Transcript, Freehold, Greater Media Newspapers

Judges comments – First Place – clear, easy to read. Visually appealing. A different way of presenting a common story. Nice to see lots of faces – very personal.

Second Place – A lot of information presented clearly. Would have been better if some could have run larger and less crowded in text.

Third Place – easy to read guide for a one-day event.

W-14 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Graphics & Illustration

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"All About Dad"

Jeremy Falls

The Current of Downbeach, Egg Harbor Township, Catamaran Media Company

Second Place

No winner

Third Place

No winner

Judges comments – Immediate visual appeal. Illustrations have great texture and a nice linear quality. Well laid-out. Combination of text and images convey father-child relationship well.

W-15 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Freshest Treatment of a Tired Topic

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Disappearing Act"

David Campbell

The Princeton Packet, Packet Publications

Second Place

"VHS Legend Shutack Is History"

Suzanne Reeds

Hunterdon County Democrat, Flemington, NJN Publishing

Third Place

"Parents Weigh in on Bulging Backpacks"

Rick Klittich

Echo Leader, Union, Worrall Community Newspapers

Judges comments – First Place – Headline did not tell the story but story cleverly written from a vegetarian’s point of view. Makes you laugh.

Second Place – Good lead – well illustrated in story. Pretty intriguing lead.

Third Place – Examples and quotes were very strong.

W-15 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Freshest Treatment of a Tired Topic

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"A Tough Holiday for Some"

Josh Saltzman

The Cranford Eagle, Worrall Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Fear of War, Terrorism Dominate..."

David Dankwa

Gazette Leader, Union, Worrall Community Newspapers

Third Place

"American Children Impress England's Father, Christmas"

Rick Mellerup

The Sandpaper, Surf City,

Judges comments – First Place – Great lead – very descriptive. Makes story of last phone booth, makes facts interesting, fun and different.

Second Place – Great quotes that create a vivid portrait of a well-known community member. Easily recognizable opening quote probably meant a lot to the community.

Third Place – Very clever approach to a Christmas story. Use of dialect was especially striking.

W-16 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

First Amendment Award

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Sealed Bail Hearing Series"

Jim Edwards

New Jersey Law Journal, Newark

Second Place

"Contractors are Top Campaign Donors"

Dan Seymour

Town News, Ridgewood, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Council Not Shy About Use of Statute"

Ken Thorbourne
The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Judges comments – Winning entries relied on more than just regular reporting – the winners filed FOIA requests, law suits, and applied some shoe leather.

W-16 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

First Amendment Award

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"The Battle Over the Budget"

David Dankwa and Mark Hrywna

Second Place

"Thousands Estimated to be Paid in OT"

Toniann Antonelli

Third Place

No winner

Judges comments – First Place – Dankwa and Hrywna not only thoroughly covered the open public record's issue but found out how neighboring governments behaved. Their work forced Hillside Township to do what they were obliged by law to do.

Second Place – Antonelli took routine police coverage a step further by paying attention to detail and acting on it.

W-17 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Best Headlines

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Cigarette Thefts"; "Bowsers"; "Making"

Mike Deak

Somerset Messenger-Gazette, Somerville, NJN Publishing

Second Place

"Concert that Wasn't Still Being Heard" and "Things Looking UpDown at the Dumps"

"Brownie..."

Carolyn Molyneaux

Pascack Valley Community Life, Westwood, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Losers Celebration," "Man-Deer Collisions" and "Cedar Run"

Neal Roberts

The Sandpaper, Surf City

Judges comments – First Place – The very best – hard news headlines – good variety – strong words – visual – not trite – clear.

Second Place – Creative word use – makes reader want to read the story.

Third Place – Deer headline is awesome – reader catching.

W-17 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Best Headlines

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Rapid Transit?" "Wedding's Really A Gas" and "He Keeps Lapping Up Wins"

Nicholas DiGiovanni

Delaware Valley News, Frenchtown, NJN Publishing

Second Place

"Chaos Reigns," "School Officials Hail" and "Dented Auto Report"

Ruth Luse

Hopewell Valley News, Packet Publications

Third Place

"Kings of the Jungle," "Fasting Impressions" and "Hip Hop Hooray"

Melissa Morgan

South Brunswick Post, Dayton, Packet Publications

Judges comments – All entries were good in general. A few were too long and would not grab my eye and create an interest to read the story. The entries that I chose for first place were very eye catching. They were unique and not too much of overused clichés. They took interesting tales on the information in the story. 2nd and 3rd did the same. They were also very interesting considering some of the topics they were writing about. In some instances all three places could have went a generic route but choose to be creative and add an interest-grabbing twist to their headlines.

W-18 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

General Typography & Layout of the Entire Paper

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

Susan Leigh Sherrill

The Ridgewood News, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

Douglas Paviluk

The Coast Star, Manasquan, Coast Star Newspapers

Third Place

Mike Deak

Somerset Messenger-Gazette, Somerville, NJN Publishing

Judges comments – In The Ridgewood News, editor has excellent sense of design and layout. Great use of headlines, subheads, quote blocks. Beautiful photography and large color photos. White space is equally important. Overall clean design. Lots of thought and care went into layout of entire paper. I would give it an A+.

**W-18 Reporting, Writing and Illustration
General Typography & Layout of the Entire Paper
Weekly, under 4,500**

First Place

"Sept. 18 & Nov. 27, 2003"

Hank Kalet

South Brunswick Post, Dayton, Packet Publications

Second Place

"Sept. 25 & Nov. 27, 2003"

Garry Herzog,

The Madison Eagle, Recorder Community Newspapers

Third Place

No winner

Judges comments – First Place – Paper distinguishes itself from its sister Packet publications and the submitted competition through photo cropping and photo layout as well as use of sidebars and boxed news teasers to related story inside. This paper reflects clean, clear, throughout use of standard design elements.

Second Place – Inside pages do not seem to reflect the care spend on its cover – which gains from excellent use of color.

Third Place – Interesting use of a different font for opinion pages.

W-19 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Front Page Layout

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

Douglas Paviluk,

The Coast Star, Manasquan, Coast Star Newspapers

Second Place

Teresa Akersten

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

Carolyn Molyneaux

Pascack Valley Community Life, Westwood, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Judges comments – First Place – Distinctive look, great photography.

Second Place – Clean, classic look, excellent choice of photographs.

Third Place – Clean lines, good use of photography, story 3rd page.

W-19 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Front Page Layout

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

Hank Kalet
South Brunswick Post, Dayton, Packet Publications

Second Place

Garry Herzog
The Madison Eagle, Recorder Community Newspapers

Third Place

Mark Moffa
Windsor-Hights Herald, Hightstown, Packet Publications

Judges comments – First Place – Great photo layout, variety of articles, headline writing.

Second Place – Photos were the best in category but layout could have been crisper.

Third Place – Really showed local flavor. Could use better photo selection.

W-20 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Editorial Section Layout & Content

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Sept. 18 and Dec. 11, 2003"
David Nahan and Eric Avedissian
Ocean City Sentinel, Sample Media, Inc.

Second Place

"July 31 and Sept. 18, 2003"
Mark S. Porter and Teresa Akersten
The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Sand Box"
Gail Travers
The Sandpaper, Surf City,

Judges comments – none available

W-20 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Editorial Section Layout & Content

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Sept. 25 and Feb. 6, 2003"
Gary Herzog
The Madison Eagle, Recorder Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Town Forum"
Steve Feitl

The Lawrence Ledger, Lawrenceville, Packet Publications

Third Place

"Town Forum"

Hank Kalet and John Saccenti

Cranbury Press, Packet Publications

Judges comments – none available

W-21 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Family Section Layout & Content

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Community Section"

Elizabeth S. Ludas

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Neighbors"

Jaimie Julia Winters, Kelly Nicholaides and Howard Prosnitz

South Bergenite, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

"Scene"

Peggi Sturmfels, Editor and Cyndy Mernick, Layout

The Two River Times

Judges comments – The Montclair Times community section is newsy and attractive, but what sets it apart is the quality of the writing, particularly the columns by Elizabeth Ludas, which are both touching and thought provoking. The South Bergenite neighbor's section has a well-designed cover, with good graphics and photos. The Two River Times scene section is a close third, offering a huge color spread one of the two weeks and interesting typography.

W-21 Reporting, Writing and Illustration

Family Section Layout & Content

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Lifestyle Section"

Linda Reddington

Tuckerton Beacon, Manahawkin, Times-Beacon Newspapers

Second Place

"Community Life"

Greg Marx

Cranford Chronicle, Clark, NJN Publishing

Third Place

"Lifestyle"

Erica Hammond

Windsor-Hights Herald, Hightstown, Packet Publications

Judges comments – Of the three top entries, the Times-Beacon was the most graphically appealing; writing quality and overall content were also very good. The Cranford Chronicle’s section was larger and more comprehensive, but not as well organized and readable. Windsor-Hights Herald’s two-page treatment was concise and well done, with good photography.

**W-22 Packaging the News Product
Sports Section Layout & Content
Weekly, over 4,500**

First Place

John Siippola

Hunterdon County Democrat, Flemington, NJN Publishing

Second Place

Greg Corbo

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

Garry Herzog

The Madison Eagle, Recorder Community Newspapers

Judges comments – First Place – Great front pages with good dominant photos. Liked the variety and depth of coverage – it was not just football! Good use of columnists too!

Inside pages not all “gray” – good use of photos for modular layout. Writing also consistently good.

Second Place – This paper must be part of a group. I saw the same layout a lot but this was the best example.

Third Place – Great variety of sports coverage. Good use of photos. Well written.

**W-22 Packaging the News Product
Sports Section Layout & Content
Weekly, under 4,500**

First Place

David P. Biggy

Beach Haven Times, Manahawkin, Times-Beacon Newspapers

Second Place

Rich Fisher

Cranbury Press, Dayton, Packet Publications

Third Place

Darius Amos and Steven Gonzalez

Pascack Valley Community Life, Westwood, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Judges comments – First Place – Clean layout. Great photos. Good choice of typography. Like the variety of coverage. Appears to cover the sports scene very completely. Good addition of schedules and box scores.

Second Place – Good layout, but pages felt a little cramped.

Third Place – Good tab layout. Great writing.

W-23 Packaging the News Product

Specialty Section

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"Arts"

Joan Finn

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Time Off"

Ilene Dube

The Princeton Packet, Packet Publications

Third Place

"Out & About"

Stephanie Blanchard

The Bernardsville News, Recorder Community Newspapers

Judges comments – First Place – Any daily would be proud of an arts section like this. Great utilization of the big space of broadsheet with many appealing, but never busy, usual elements.

Second Place – Excellent use of white space is a rarity in tabloids, but this one isn't afraid of a clean, open look with ample pictures and clear organization.

Third Place – Halloween section particularly worthy with handsome visual motifs that carry thru the book.

W-23 Packaging the News Product

Specialty Section

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Football 2003"

Bob Decker

Citizen of Morris County, Denville, Recorder Community Newspapers

Second Place

No winner

Third Place

No winner

Judges comments – Big, bold and beautiful, this section offered stunning, well-chosen photographs, creative design and clear organization. It came from a paper under 4,500 circulation but it definitely would have won a prize even had it been competing against the larger papers.

W-24 Packaging the News Product

Special Issue

Weekly, over 4,500

First Place

"135 Years of Montclair"

Staff

The Montclair Times, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Sr. Choices for Today's Seniors"

Staff

New Jersey Jewish News, Whippany

Third Place

"Holiday Traditions"

Eileen Moon, Cyndy Mermick and Scott Longfield

The Two River Times, Red Bank

Judges comments – First Place – Strong community journalism – readable history – good old photos. Layout stands out. This is what local newspapers should be doing more of!

Second Place – Strong design. Editorial content targeted – clear writing – visual delight.

Third Place – Clean, strong layout. Fonts for headlines need to be more consistent – not fond of the script. Kudos to ad staff for clean ads that improve total look.

W-24 Packaging the News Product

Special Issue

Weekly, under 4,500

First Place

"Our Favorite Places"

Garry Herzog and Judi Whiting

The Madison Eagle, Recorder Community Newspapers

Second Place

"Nutley Townscape 2003-2004"

Staff

The Nutley Sun, North Jersey Community Newspapers

Third Place

No winner

Judges comments – First Place – Fresh idea – having people write about their favorite spots turned into gem for a paper with a small staff. Photos are strong for section. Blends people into a “places” section that could have been a dull list!

Second Place – Good for what it is – a listings publication.