



**For release:** May 22, 2026  
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## **Select APA Media Awards Editorial Contest Winners Announced**

**Birmingham, AL (May 22, 2026)** –Winners in select categories of the 2026 Alabama Press Association Media Awards were announced by Dee Ann Campbell, chairman of the AMA Contest Committee. This year, 51 publications submitted 1,727 entries in the annual contest. The Pennsylvania News Media Association membership judged the entries.

First-place awards in many categories and divisions, including the winners of the A-Mark Investigative Journalism and Center for Integrity in News Reporting awards and cash prizes, will be presented in conjunction with the 2026 APA Summer Convention banquet awards program on Saturday, June 27, at the Perdido Beach Resort.

***Congratulations to all of the winners!***

## **Best Production and Printing**

### Division B

- 1st Place: The Cullman Tribune by Dustin Isom, TVM  
2nd Place: The Clanton Advertiser by staff

### Division C

- 1st Place: Birmingham Business Journal by staff  
2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) by Chris Love  
3rd Place: Call News (Citronelle) by staff

### Division D

- 1st Place: The Dadeville Record by Lee Champion  
2nd Place: The Wetumpka Herald by Lee Champion

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) by staff

## **Cat. 08 Best Layout and Design**

### Division A

- 1st Place: The Tuscaloosa News by Design Center staff  
2nd Place: Montgomery Advertiser by Savannah Williams, Robin Ferguson, Design Center staff

### Division B

*Division B hard copy entries for four categories remained unjudged at the deadline. They are being shipped back to APA for reassignment/judging.*

- 1st Place: TBD  
2nd Place: TBD  
3rd Place: TBD

### Division C

- 1st Place: Birmingham Business Journal by Jake Stevens  
2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) by Connor Bucy, Rowan Futrell, Jamie Dawkins  
3rd Place: Call News (Citronelle) by staff

### Division D

- 1st Place: The Wetumpka Herald by staff  
2nd Place: The Baldwin Times by McKinzie Impastato, Brooke Duck  
3rd Place: The Dadeville Record by staff

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) by Kelley Lane  
2nd Place: The Birmingham Times by Kathryn Sesser-Dorne  
3rd Place: Hoover Sun by Melanie Viering, Ted Perry

## **Cat. 09 Best Spot News Story**

### **Division A**

- 1st Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Alabama executes Anthony Todd Boyd by nitrogen gas for 1993 murder and kidnapping" by Sarah Clifton
- 2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Republican Alabama congressman running for Senate booed at town hall, leaves out the back" by John Sharp
- 3rd Place: The Anniston Star for "Wildfires prompt evacuations in Calhoun county" by Ashley Morrison, Bill Wilson

### **Division B**

- 1st Place: The Cullman Tribune for "Grand jury calls for abolition of Hanceville PD; 6 arrested" by Lauren Estes, Nick Griffin
- 2nd Place: The News-Courier (Athens) for "Downtown Destruction" by Justin Travis
- 3rd Place: The Valley Times-News (Lanett) for "Monks travel through Cusseta" by Brandon Ussery

### **Division C**

- 1st Place: Lagniappe (Mobile) for "Local barista attacked, bitten by monkey that jumped into drive-thru window" by Scott Johnson
- 2nd Place: Lagniappe (Mobile) for "Fairhope police arrest woman in phallic costume during protests" by Scott Johnson
- 3rd Place: Lagniappe (Mobile) for "Sheriff's ICE Halloween display draws criticism" by Scott Johnson

### **Division D**

- 1st Place: The Baldwin Times for "State pauses \$40K in Fairhope library funding over 'inappropriate books'" by Colin James
- 2nd Place: Selma Sun for "Dallas County School takeover" by Brad Fisher
- 3rd Place: The Baldwin Times for "Baldwin County food pantries brace for rising demand as SNAP cuts take effect nationwide" by Gabriella Chavez

### **Division E**

- 1st Place: The Trussville Tribune for "Irondale Council votes to censure fellow council member after recent media coverage" by Terry Schrimsher
- 2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Garrison outlines gate, service operations during furlough" by Marian Accardi
- 3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "U.S. Space Command headquarters move to Redstone moves forward with site unveiling" by Marian Accardi

## **Cat. 10 Best In-Depth News Coverage**

### **Division A**

- 1st Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Mass shooting in downtown Montgomery" by staff
- 2nd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Angie Stone death" by Shannon Heupel
- 3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Where Tommy Tuberville lives may be the biggest question of the 2026 election" by John Sharp

### **Division B**

- 1st Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "Maplesville Tornado" by Carey Reeder, Alec Etheredge
- 2nd Place: The Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper) for "Walker County Sheriff's Office" by Ed Howell

3rd Place: Jackson County Sentinel (Scottsboro) for "Local pharmacists speak on how PBMs adversely affect Jackson County pharmacies" by Katie Hightower

#### Division C

1st Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "Data center coverage" by staff

2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Horror close to home" by Daniel Locke, Noah Wortham

3rd Place: Lagniappe (Mobile) for "Mobile aerospace firm reports data breach" by Scott Johnson

#### Division D

1st Place: Selma Sun for "Good Samaritan Hospital" by Cindy Fisher, Todd Prater

2nd Place: Selma Sun for "Teen shootings" by Cindy Fisher, Valencia Benjamin

3rd Place: The Clay Times-Journal (Lineville) for "The Wesobulga Hanging" by Mike Pettus

#### Division E

1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Suicide prevention and awareness" by Eric Schultz, Marian Accardi

2nd Place: The Birmingham Times for "Inside Jefferson County Commission's \$25M Pork Barrel Bonanza" by Barnett Wright, Hannah Denham

3rd Place: Hoover Sun for "2025 Voter Guide" by Jon Anderson

### **Cat. 11 Best Business Story or Column**

#### Division A

1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Alabama farmer has Parkinson's. He's among thousands who say weed killer is to blame" by Margaret Kates

2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Tommy Tuberville is one of the busiest stock traders in Congress. Some deals raise 'red flags'" by Hannah Denham, Howard Koplowitz

3rd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Jackson Hospital faces ultimatum from judge as questions linger about funding" by Sarah Clifton

#### Division B

1st Place: The News-Courier (Athens) for "Stebbins Family Farm" by Benjamin Bullard

2nd Place: Jackson County Sentinel (Scottsboro) for "Liberty" by Katie Hightower

3rd Place: The Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper) for "EV charging stations scattered in Jasper" by Ed Howell

#### Division C

1st Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "Church projects" by Samuel Stettheimer

2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Prescribing a solution" by Noah Wortham

3rd Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "Venture Capital in Birmingham" by Harper Harwell

#### Division D

1st Place: Selma Sun for "Good Samaritan Hospital" by Todd Prater, Cindy Fisher

2nd Place: The Greensboro Watchman for "Project Whisker' could see long-idle Greensboro catfish facility brought back into operation" by John Allan Clark

3rd Place: Selma Sun for "ATC graduate" by Todd Prater

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Food trucks offer variety for workforce tastes" by Marian Accardi
- 2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "SNIPPETS: QR code would be great way to leave a tip" by Jonathan Stinson
- 3rd Place: The Sand Mountain Leader (Albertville) for "Huge win for Boaz" by Donna Thornton

## **Cat. 12 Best Feature Story Coverage**

### Division A

- 1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Family's tragic loss turns into Ryker's Rainbow: 'Honor to remember all these babies and children'" by Amber Sutton
- 2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "How Huntsville music venues make concerts more awesome for fans with disabilities" by Matt Wake
- 3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "'Let your nerd flag fly': Gamers can eat, drink and be merry at this welcoming haven in Alabama" by Mary Colurso

### Division B

- 1st Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "PFC Thomas American Homecoming" by Carey Reeder
- 2nd Place: The Cullman Times for "Law enforcement 'legend' Wendell Roden remembered" by Benjamin Bullard
- 3rd Place: The Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper) for "Sumiton student gifted a memorable trip with his friends" by Nicole Smith

### Division C

- 1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Super Sam's story" by Tyler Raley
- 2nd Place: The Citizen of East Alabama (Phenix City) for "60 Years later: Reunited, and it feels so good" by Mark Clark
- 3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Duo overcomes critical crisis" by Noah Wortham

### Division D

- 1st Place: Selma Sun for "Ora Bell Shannon" by Todd Prater
- 2nd Place: The Tuskegee News for "Louise Nall to retire from distributing newspapers after 59 years of service" by Guy Rhodes
- 3rd Place: Times-Standard-Herald (Marion) for "Moreland named to Ala. Military Hall of Honor in ceremony at MMI" by Brian Clements

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Birmingham Times for "Birmingham Royalty: Businessman Dr. Jesse J. Lewis Sr. Turns 100" by Barnett Wright
- 2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Former Soldier recognized for helping save teen's life" by Marian Accardi
- 3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "All aboard: Model railroads connect generations" by Eric Schultz

## **Cat. 13 Best News Feature Story Coverage**

### Division A

- 1st Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Montgomery Bus Boycott 60th anniversary" by staff
- 2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "A frozen jail inmate, 25 indictments and an Alabama sheriff still

standing" by Greg Garrison, Carol Robinson

3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Alabama woman horrified to learn her 'all-American father' was a serial killer" by Carol Robinson

#### Division B

1st Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "PFC Thomas American Homecoming" by Carey Reeder

2nd Place: The News-Courier (Athens) for "Final Curtain Call" by Justin Travis

3rd Place: The News-Courier (Athens) for "A terrible situation" by Benjamin Bullard

#### Division C

1st Place: Lagniappe (Mobile) for "Hope they're paying attention — Stringer claims MAWSS not transparent, unaccountable" by Scott Johnson

2nd Place: Lagniappe (Mobile) for "Trooper: Father allegedly took item from fatal DUI crash site" by Scott Johnson

3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Dunn terminated after hearing" by Noah Wortham

#### Division D

1st Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "CJ's Adventure" by Cliff Williams

2nd Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "Miracle at Redland Elementary" by Cliff Williams

3rd Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "First responders ready" by Cliff Williams

#### Division E

1st Place: Hoover Sun for "Journey to Miss America" by Jon Anderson

2nd Place: Hoover Sun for "Hoover woman marks 80th birthday with 84-mile trek" by Kelli S. Hewett

3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Redstone worker, ex-Soldier who saves young runner hit by a car gets award" by Marian Accardi

### **Cat. 14 Best Editorial**

#### Division B

1st Place: The Cullman Tribune for "The Cost of Chaos, blogs, livestreams and the erosion of local news" by Noah Galilee

2nd Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "Remembering my grandfather, Andy" by Carey Reeder

3rd Place: The Cullman Tribune for "Hope as the Next Step" by Noah Galilee

#### Division C

1st Place: The Montgomery Independent for "Tuberville's Move Shakes Up Statewide Election Plans" by Jeff Martin

2nd Place: The Montgomery Independent for "It Is Not The Government's Job To Raise Your Babies, It's Yours." by Brian Hodge

3rd Place: Call News (Citronelle) for "The Alabama Prison Mess" by Jeff Poor

#### Division D

1st Place: The Baldwin Times for "Out-of-state, local business support main patterns in Fairhope candidate's campaign donations" by Kayla Green

2nd Place: The Clay Times-Journal (Lineville) for "That's not my job" by Tammy Andrews

3rd Place: The Clay Times-Journal (Lineville) for "Always be Kind" by Tammy Andrews

### Division E

1st Place: The Sand Mountain Leader (Albertville) for "Citizens deserve respectful elections" by David Clemons

## **Cat. 15 Best Humorous Column**

### Division A

1st Place: The Anniston Star by Lisa Davis  
2nd Place: The Tuscaloosa News by Ken Roberts

### Division B

1st Place: Jackson County Sentinel (Scottsboro) for "I'm slow getting up" by David Carroll  
2nd Place: Jackson County Sentinel (Scottsboro) for "How am I doing?" by David Carroll  
3rd Place: The Cullman Tribune for "Rudolph – an exclusive interview" by Joe Hobby

### Division C

1st Place: Lagniappe (Mobile) for "Hidden Agenda: All up in your colon" by Ashley Trice  
2nd Place: Lagniappe (Mobile) for "Damn the Torpedoes: A frigid glimpse into the future" by Rob Holbert  
3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "The Friday nights that bind us" by Andrew Simonson

### Division D

1st Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "Is this a bad dream?" by Cliff Williams

### Division E

1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "SNIPPETS: Superman learns kitchen drawer has tool for any job" by Jonathan Stinson  
2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "SNIPPETS: AI doesn't get my jokes – or my em dash" by Jonathan Stinson  
3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "SNIPPETS: Saban, the GOAT, used a podium, so you should, too" by Jonathan Stinson

## **Cat. 16 Best Human Interest Column**

### Division A

1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "How did an anti-Trump sign dispute escalate and send an Alabama man to jail?" by Roy S. Johnson  
2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Small town Alabama is the only home Fonzie knows, but ICE came for him anyway" by John Archibald  
3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "A time to love and be loved back" by Ben Thomas

### Division B

1st Place: The Cullman Tribune for "Woe to Little Eyes" by Gauge Day  
2nd Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "Water can be thicker than blood" by Lizi Arbogast  
3rd Place: The News-Courier (Athens) for "Police professionalism" by John Davis

### Division C

1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Fighting for a better world" by Andrew Simonson  
3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Bolstering suicide prevention" by Alec Etheredge  
3rd Place: The Montgomery Independent for "I fed 200 columns to a machine. It remembered them all." by Jeff Martin

#### Division D

- 1st Place: The Tuskegee News for "It all started down in good ol' Brewton" by Michael Floyd  
2nd Place: The Clay Times-Journal (Lineville) for "The Blessing" by Tammy Andrews  
3rd Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "Love thy neighbor as thyself" by Cliff Williams

#### Division E

- 1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "SNIPPETS: Things will be OK, just hold on for another day" by Jonathan Stinson  
2nd Place: The Sand Mountain Leader (Albertville) for "The Iron Bowl is a part of the nation's fabric – for better and for worse" by David Clemons  
3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "SNIPPETS: People step up for people when necessary" by Jonathan Stinson

### **Cat. 17 Best Editorial Column or Commentary**

#### Division A

- 1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Kay Ivey's legacy gets a much-deserved \$1.2 billion life sentence" by Roy S. Johnson  
2nd Place: The Tuscaloosa News for "Is the United States walking the path to tyranny?" by Gary Cosby Jr.  
3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Show us where you pay taxes, Tommy Tuberville" by Kyle Whitmire

#### Division B

- 1st Place: The News-Courier (Athens) for "(The Owl's Eye) What's a free press" by John Davis  
2nd Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "Together we crack down on violence" by Lizi Arbogast  
3rd Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "If one person was helped, it was all worth it...and more" by Carey Reeder

#### Division C

- 1st Place: The Choctaw Sun-Advocate (Gilbertown) for "Blonde Ambition" by Dee Ann Campbell  
2nd Place: Lagniappe (Mobile) for "Damn the Torpedoes — Commentary by Rob Holbert" by Rob Holbert  
3rd Place: The Montgomery Independent for "Across The Publisher's Desk" by Jeff Martin

#### Division D

- 1st Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "County needs more facilities to cultivate the arts" by Cliff Williams  
2nd Place: The Dadeville Record for "Another case of 'social media journalism' gone wrong" by Lizi Arbogast  
3rd Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "Watch the polyticks" by Cliff Williams

#### Division E

- 1st Place: The Trussville Tribune for "HSAA flips the finger at Alabama law" by Scott Buttram  
2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "SNIPPETS: People step up for people when necessary" by Jonathan Stinson

### **Cat. 18 Best Sports News In-Depth Coverage**

#### Division A

- 1st Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Auburn stampede" by Adam Cole

- 2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Alabama revoked football tickets, disrupted shadow market and quietly built its own" by Michael Casagrande
- 3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Nick Saban, Lane Kiffin and an ethical dilemma for ESPN's College Gameday: 'rockiest place to be'" by Matt Stahl

#### Division B

- 1st Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "Maplesville State Championship Coverage" by Carey Reeder
- 2nd Place: The Fort Payne Times-Journal for "Panther Boys Soccer Spring 2025" by Heath Hambrick
- 3rd Place: Jackson County Sentinel (Scottsboro) for "Changes for Pisgah Football" by Jason Bowen

#### Division C

- 1st Place: Call News (Citronelle) for "Tabbitha Baggett" by Jimmy Wigfield
- 2nd Place: Call News (Citronelle) for "EJ Crowell" by Jimmy Wigfield
- 3rd Place: The Citizen of East Alabama (Phenix City) for "We are the Champs - State Flag Football Championship" by Mark Clark

#### Division D

- 1st Place: The Observer (Opelika) for "2025 High School Football Preview Series" by staff
- 2nd Place: The Observer (Opelika) for "War Eagle all the way" by Brandon Hughes
- 3rd Place: Union Springs Herald for "Hornets clawed by Wolverines" by Darius L. Cates

#### Division E

- 1st Place: The Sand Mountain Leader (Albertville) for "Branson wore his testimony on the field/For Branson" by Taylor Beck, Donna Thornton
- 2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Senior Softball" by Skip Vaughn
- 3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Army Ten-Miler" by Skip Vaughn

### **Cat. 19 Best Sports Single Event Story**

#### Division A

- 1st Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Auburn basketball: A night inside the Jungle Village student campsite before the Alabama game" by Adam Cole
- 2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "How one Alabama high school official's quick action saved a life" by Ben Thomas
- 3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "College football isn't about Alabama anymore" by Matt Stahl

#### Division B

- 1st Place: The Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper) for "Addison adds another title" by Johnathan Bentley
- 2nd Place: Jackson County Sentinel (Scottsboro) for "Never a Doubt" by Jason Bowen
- 3rd Place: Jackson County Sentinel (Scottsboro) for "Championship Plan" by Jason Bowen

#### Division C

- 1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Good sports" by Andrew Simonson
- 2nd Place: Call News (Citronelle) for "Everything but the ultimate prize" by Jimmy Wigfield
- 3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Right on target" by Andrew Simonson

#### Division D

- 1st Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "Panthers suffer injuries, heartbreak" by Ana Sofia Meyer

- 2nd Place: The LaFayette Sun for "LaFayette High School hires new head coach" by Daniel Schmidt  
3rd Place: The Observer (Opelika) for "Hooked on gold: Lee County fishermen win world title" by Hannah Herrera

#### Division E

- 1st Place: The Sand Mountain Leader for "Pirates leap for a victory/Fant-astic night for Boaz" by Taylor Beck  
2nd Place: The Birmingham Times for "Once BCS teammates, now Magic City Classic rivals" by Solomon Crenshaw Jr.  
3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "USA Patriots softball team exemplifies resilience" by Eric Schultz

### **Cat. 20 Best Sports Feature Story**

#### Division A

- 1st Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Bo Jackson legendary Auburn tales, from herculean home runs to fantastic 40-yard dashes" by Adam Cole  
2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Is Jordan-Hare Stadium haunted?" by Matt Stahl  
3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "How 1 family plans to manage a state title baseball series, wedding in same weekend" by Ben Thomas

#### Division B

- 1st Place: The Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper) for "Curry's Taylor takes game to next level" by Johnathan Bentley  
2nd Place: The Cullman Times for "With sights set on new chapter, 'forever grateful' Tammy West takes over Cullman hoops program" by Jake Winfrey  
3rd Place: The News-Courier (Athens) for "'Always Chase Your Dreams'" by Justin Travis

#### Division C

- 1st Place: Call News (Citronelle) for "Derby Dreams" by Jimmy Wigfield  
2nd Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "UAB Football 10 Years Later" by Marie Leech  
3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Williams battles diabetes, wins Athlete of the Year" by Andrew Simonson

#### Division D

- 1st Place: The Tallassee Tribune for "The Weight of a Legacy" by Ana Sofia Meyer  
2nd Place: The Tallassee Tribune for "Coach of the Year: Tallassee's Matt Tarpley" by Ana Sofia Meyer  
3rd Place: The Tallassee Tribune for "From new wrestler to coach of the year" by Ana Sofia Meyer

#### Division E

- 1st Place: The Trussville Tribune for "Floyd completes Clay-Chalkville Grand Slam with 6A State Title" by John Goolsby  
2nd Place: The Trussville Tribune for "A stadium that never stopped winning: The history of Mountie Stadium and its final chapter at Clay-Chalkville" by John Goolsby, Shane Paschal  
3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Paracyclists stop in Rocket City before taking on world" by Eric Schultz

## **Cat. 21 Best Local Sports Column**

### Division A

- 1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Hugh Freeze looks tired. It's time for a change, Auburn." by Michael Casagrande
- 2nd Place: The Anniston Star by Mark Edwards
- 3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Get it over with and fire Kalen DeBoer" by Joseph Goodman

### Division B

- 1st Place: The Cullman Tribune for "How do you get your football?" by Bill King
- 2nd Place: The Cullman Tribune for "The Olympics for older athletes" by Bill King
- 3rd Place: The Fort Payne Times-Journal for "Fathers, sons, and sports" by Heath Hambrick

### Division C

- 1st Place: Call News (Citronelle) for "Terry Curtis an inspiration to all" by Jimmy Wigfield
- 2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "It's past time to require shot clocks" by Andrew Simonson
- 3rd Place: Call News (Citronelle) for "What the ELL is going on" by Jimmy Wigfield

### Division D

- 1st Place: The Baldwin Times for "Why the AHSAA should adopt a running clock mercy rule for prep football" by Kam Wicker
- 2nd Place: The Dadeville Record for "Reeltown battles more than the game in the semifinals" by Samuel Higgs
- 3rd Place: The Tallahassee Tribune for "Malik Beasley and the wide-reaching effects of promoted sports betting" by Ana Sofia Meyer

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Rewinding highlight reels from years past" by Skip Vaughn
- 2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Rocket City hits home run for USA masters track meet" by Skip Vaughn
- 3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "High school football team's losing streak reaches 101" by Skip Vaughn

## **Cat. 22 Best Feature Photo**

### Division A

- 1st Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Mini Ref" by Jake Crandall
- 2nd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Snow angels" by Mickey Welsh
- 2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Loser, loser" by Will McLelland

### Division B

- 1st Place: The Cullman Times for "Too close for comfort" by Amanda Shavers
- 2nd Place: The Cullman Times for "Pie face" by Amanda Shavers
- 3rd Place: The Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper) for "Christmas magic in downtown Jasper" by Nicole Smith

### Division C

- 1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Honoring the fallen" by Jeremy Raines  
2nd Place: The Citizen of East Alabama (Phenix City) for "Gators' bombs down Central" by Brad Beasley  
3rd Place: Call News (Citronelle) for "The Miracle of a child's smile" by Helen Joyce

### Division D

- 1st Place: The Tallahassee Tribune for "Easter Egg hunt" by Cliff Williams  
2nd Place: The Baldwin Times for "Forgotten to time" by Colin James  
3rd Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "Polar Plunge" by Cliff Williams

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Down slide" by Eric Schultz  
2nd Place: The Birmingham Times for "Rebirth of the Cool" by Marika N. Johnson  
3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Milwaukee line" by Eric Schultz

## **Cat. 23 Best News Photo**

### Division A

- 1st Place: The Anniston Star for "Robert Kilmartin" by Bill Wilson, Ashley Morrison  
2nd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "No Kings Protest" by Jake Crandall  
3rd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Cannabis protest" by Mickey Welsh

### Division B

- 1st Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "American Homecoming" by staff  
2nd Place: The Cullman Times for "Hanceville residents react to HPD corruption" by Amanda Shavers  
3rd Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "Rebuilding" by Carey Reeder, Alec Etheredge

### Division C

- 1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "A helping hand" by Dawn Harrison  
2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Land of the free" by Jeremy Raines  
3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Winter in Whoville" by Tyler Raley

### Division D

- 1st Place: The Islander (Gulf Shores) for "Bulls on the Beach" by Micah Green  
2nd Place: The LaFayette Sun for "Walk for Peace" by Scott Dulaney  
3rd Place: The Clay Times-Journal (Lineville) for "Train Derailment" by Tammy Andrews

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Birmingham Times for "Building a legacy as Birmingham's 'Education Mayor'" by Amarr Crosky

## **Cat. 24 Best Spot News Photo**

### Division A

- 1st Place: The Tuscaloosa News for "Tornado in Gordo" by Gary Cosby Jr.  
2nd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "School fire" by Jake Crandall  
3rd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Tornado survivor" by Mickey Welsh

### Division B

- 1st Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "Rebuilding" by Carey Reeder, Alec Etheredge  
2nd Place: The Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper) for "Peace in the storm" by Nicole Smith  
3rd Place: The Cullman Tribune for "Fairview High School hosts Centennial Celebration" by Lauren Estes

### Division C

- 1st Place: Call News (Citronelle) for "Church burns after being hit by fireball car" by Willie Gray  
2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Tesla driver crashes into Starbucks" by Tyler Raley  
3rd Place: The Choctaw Sun-Advocate (Gilbertown) for "Truck Fire" by Tommy Campbell

### Division D

- 1st Place: The Moundville Times for "Electrical storm rocks Moundville" by Mike Goodall  
2nd Place: The Observer (Opelika) for "Semi-truck fire shuts down Interstate 85 overnight" by Emily Key  
3rd Place: The Baldwin Times for "Snowball fight at the beach" by Kayla Green

## **Cat. 25 Best Sports Photo**

### Division A

- 1st Place: The Tuscaloosa News for "Alabama's Paityn Walker on bars" by Gary Cosby Jr.  
2nd Place: The Tuscaloosa News for "Bronco Riding at the Tuscaloosa Rodeo" by Gary Cosby Jr.  
3rd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Goalline stretch" by Mickey Welsh

### Division B

- 1st Place: The Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper) for "Cordova Baseball" by Johnathan Bentley  
2nd Place: The News-Courier (Athens) for "Making Reservations" by Jake Winfrey  
3rd Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "Benjamin Russell football" by Kenneth Boone

### Division C

- 1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Vincent secures first baseball title since 1985" by Alec Etheredge  
2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Briarwood's Julia Roberts goes for the kill" by Dawn Harrison  
3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Good sports" by Tracy Franklin

### Division D

- 1st Place: The Dadeville Record for "Reeltown football" by Samuel Higgs  
2nd Place: The Observer (Opelika) for "Collision Course" by Robert Noles  
3rd Place: The Observer (Opelika) for "By Leaps and Bounds" by Robert Noles

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Swing batter" by Skip Vaughn  
2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Gold medal finish" by Skip Vaughn  
3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Volleyball return" by Skip Vaughn

## **Cat. 26 Best Photo Essay**

### Division A

- 1st Place: The Tuscaloosa News for "Nutcracker ballet at the Bama Theatre" by Gary Cosby Jr.

2nd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Plantersville tornado" by Mickey Welsh  
3rd Place: The Tuscaloosa News for "SEC Basketball Media Days" by Gary Cosby Jr.

#### Division B

1st Place: The Cullman Times for "Wreaths Across America" by Amanda Shavers  
2nd Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "Fan Fair" by staff  
3rd Place: The Cullman Times for "Homecoming" by Amanda Shavers

#### Division C

1st Place: The Choctaw Sun-Advocate (Gilbertown) for "The storm that changed everything" by Dee Ann Campbell  
2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Gone but not forgotten" by Jeremy Raines  
3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Rides and revelry" by Jeremy Raines

#### Division D

1st Place: The Baldwin Times for "Record-breaking snow storm on the beach" by Kayla Green  
2nd Place: The LaFayette Sun for "SNOW Better Time" by staff  
3rd Place: The Baldwin Times for "SS United States" by Micah Green

#### Division E

1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Oktoberfest weekend" by Eric Schultz  
2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Working dogs in action" by Jonathan Stinson  
3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Combat fitness" by Jonathan Stinson

### **Cat. 27 Best Use of Graphics or Illustrations**

#### Division A

1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Growing pains" by Mila Oliveira  
2nd Place: The Tuscaloosa News for "NEVER FORGOTTEN candle illustration" by Sean Gardner  
3rd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Auburn Iron Bowl Intensity Poster" by Kaia Evans

#### Division B

1st Place: Jackson County Sentinel (Scottsboro) for "Celebrate Safely" by Elizabeth Law  
2nd Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "Maplesville State Championship" by Carey Reeder  
3rd Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "Weather Radio" by Audra Spears, Melody Rathel

#### Division C

1st Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "No Small Peanuts" by Jake Stevens  
2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Horror close to home" by Connor Bucy  
3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Hanging up the phone" by Connor Bucy

#### Division D

1st Place: The LaFayette Sun for "Are you ready for football" by Ryan Smith, Michelle Key

#### Division E

1st Place: The Birmingham Times for "A Rich Tradition" by staff  
2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "From the Archives Nov 26" by Jonathan Stinson

3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "From the Archives July 23" by Jonathan Stinson

## **Cat. 28 Best Headline**

### Division A

1st Place: The Anniston Star for "TP plot foiled by foam dart fury" by Bill Wilson, Donna Barton, Ashley Morrison

2nd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "A 'Peace' of Paradise" by Jade Inglada

3rd Place: Montgomery Advertiser for "Starstruck" by Savannah Williams

### Division B

1st Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "Holly, Jolly, Soggy Christmas" by Carey Reeder

2nd Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "The tassel is worth the hassle" by Melody Rathel

3rd Place: The News-Courier (Athens) for "Bring Home the Bacon!" by Benjamin Bullard

### Division C

1st Place: Call News (Citronelle) for "No Dice on Gaming" by Doug Dimitry

2nd Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "More Patients Check In As Therapists Check Out" by Marie Leech

3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Unbelieva-bull" by Noah Wortham

### Division D

1st Place: The Onlooker (Foley) for "This Robertsedale diner is off the rails — in the best way" by Whisper Edwards

2nd Place: The Moundville Times for "Sole Train!" by Isaac Vaughn, Travis Vaughn

3rd Place: Union Springs Herald for "Double Trouble: Juvenile steals same truck twice, caught after highway chase" by Felicia Farnsworth

### Division E

1st Place: The Sand Mountain Leader (Albertville) for "6-Cess!" by David Clemons

2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "App trap: Hidden technology abusers use" by Skip Vaughn

3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Volunteer sinks teeth into dental assistant program" by Skip Vaughn

## **Cat. 29 Best Special Section - Newsprint**

### Division A

1st Place: The Anniston Star for "Readers' Choice" by staff

### Division B

*Division B hard copy entries for four categories remained unjudged at the deadline. They are being shipped back to APA for reassignment/judging.*

1st Place: TBD for

2nd Place: TBD for

3rd Place: TBD for

### Division C

- 1st Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "40 Under 40"  
2nd Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "Women's Summit"  
3rd Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "Best Places to Work"

### Division D

- 1st Place: The Baldwin Times for "Voter's Guide"  
2nd Place: The Observer (Opelika) for "Opelika Politics"  
3rd Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "Gridirion Guide"

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Veterans Day 2025"  
2nd Place: The Birmingham Times for "Black History Month - Youth Provide Hope For The Future"  
3rd Place: St. Clair Times (Pell City) for "2026 Pigskin Preview"

## **Cat. 30 Best Niche Publication - Newsprint or Glossy**

### Division A

- 1st Place: The Anniston Star for "High School Football 2025"

### Division B

*Division B hard copy entries for four categories remained unjudged at the deadline. They are being shipped back to APA for reassignment/judging.*

- 1st Place: TBD for  
2nd Place: TBD for  
3rd Place: TBD for

### Division C

- 1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Profile"  
2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Explore Shelby"  
3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Metro Football"

### Division D

- 1st Place: The Baldwin Times for "Big Beautiful Baldwin"  
2nd Place: The Dadeville Record for "Dadeville Magazine"  
3rd Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "FYI"

### Division E

- 1st Place: Hoover Sun for "Under the Lights"  
2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Armed Forces Celebration"  
3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Cumings Research Park"

## **Cat. 31 Creative Use of Multimedia**

### Division A

- 1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Names in Crimson Flame" by Nick Kelly, staff

### Division B

- 1st Place: The Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper) for "DME PrepZone Show" by Johnathan Bentley, Zak McCullar, Jake Aaron
- 2nd Place: The Cullman Tribune for "Bedtime Stories – Debra Reynolds reads The Marvelous Now" by Dustin Isom, Debra Reynolds
- 3rd Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "Staycation" by staff

### Division C

- 1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Shelby County Hall of Fame" by Alec Etheredge, Noah Wortham, Tyler Raley
- 2nd Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "Inside the Mansion" by Marie Leech, Bob Farley
- 3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Thompson State Championship" by Alec Etheredge

### Division D

- 1st Place: Selma Sun for "Black Belt Newscast" by Cindy Fisher, Todd Prater
- 2nd Place: Selma Sun for "Voices & Visionaries" by Todd Prater
- 3rd Place: The LaFayette Sun for "Observe the Sunrise" by Michelle Key

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Trussville Tribune for "Municipal Candidate Forum" by staff
- 2nd Place: The Trussville Tribune for "Tribune Unscripted" by staff

## **Cat. 32 Online Breaking News Coverage**

### Division A

- 1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Tornadoes kill 3 people across Alabama" by Carol Robinson, Mike Cason, Heather Gann, staff
- 2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "The killing of Jabari Peoples" by Carol Robinson
- 3rd Place: The Anniston Star for "Doug Ghee indicted on criminal charges" by Ashley Morrison, Bill Wilson

### Division B

- 1st Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "ICE Coverage" by Carey Reeder
- 2nd Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "March 15 tornado" by staff
- 3rd Place: Jackson County Sentinel (Scottsboro) for "Domestic incident leads to officer-involved shooting, 21-hour manhunt" by Hunter Jones, Katie Hightower

### Division C

- 1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Tornado coverage" by Alec Etheredge, Noah Wortham
- 2nd Place: Lagniappe (Mobile) for "ALDOT breaks up with Bayway contractor" by staff
- 3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "UM president retires amid financial struggles" by Noah Wortham

### Division D

- 1st Place: Selma Sun for "Teen shootout at Walmart leads to death of bystander" by staff
- 2nd Place: The Baldwin Times for "Record-setting snowfall" by staff
- 3rd Place: The Wetumpka Herald for "DUI Manslaughter" by Cliff Williams

### Division E

1st Place: The Trussville Tribune for "Jake Ganus; leaves Moody after 5A title and takes Pell City job." by Johnny Sanders, John Goolsby

## **Cat. 33 Best Use of Social Media**

### Division A

1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Alabama's best Christmas display" by staff  
2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Alabama teen tricks out classic Cadillac for West Coast rapper" by Monica Keener  
3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Unsung Alabama: Highlighting our state's hidden treasures" by Monica Keener, Madison Underwood, staff

### Division B

1st Place: The Daily Mountain Eagle (Jasper) for "DME Social Media" by staff  
2nd Place: Jackson County Sentinel (Scottsboro) for "JCS Social Media" by staff  
3rd Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "The Clanton Advertiser Instagram" by staff

### Division C

1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "SCR Social Media" by staff  
2nd Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "BBJ Social Media" by staff

### Division D

1st Place: Selma Sun for "Selma Sun/Black Belt News Network Social Media" by staff  
2nd Place: The Baldwin Times for "Gulf Coast Media Facebook" by Micah Green, staff  
3rd Place: Sumter County Record-Journal (Livingston) for "SCRJ Facebook" by Tommy McGraw

### Division E

1st Place: The Trussville Tribune for "TribSportsLive" by staff  
2nd Place: The Trussville Tribune for "Tribune Unscripted" by staff  
3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "RR Social Media" by Erin Elise Enyinda

## **Cat. 34 Best Podcast Series**

### Division A

1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Down in Alabama" by Ike Morgan  
2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Beat Everyone" by Ben Flanagan  
3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "American Shrapnel" by John Archibald, John Hammontree, Becca Andrews

### Division B

1st Place: The Cullman Tribune for "Cullman Today" by Dustin Isom, Anabelle Howze, Christine Wiggins  
2nd Place: The Cullman Tribune for "Bedtime Stories" by Dustin Isom, Janet Chandler, community members  
3rd Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "TPI The Podcast" by staff

### Division C

- 1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Live Shelby County Pregame Show" by Andrew Simonson, Tyler Raley, Alec Etheredge
- 2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "The Shelby County Football Show" by Andrew Simonson, Alec Etheredge
- 3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "The Red Zone" by Tyler Raley

### Division D

- 1st Place: Selma Sun for "Black Belt Newscast Podcast" by Cindy Fisher, Todd Prater

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "P\$yFi" by staff
- 2nd Place: The Trussville Tribune for "The Green Flag" by John Goolsby, Andrew Pinkerton

## **Cat. 35 Best Use of Video (Shorter than 2 minutes)**

### Division A

- 1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Should someone with a 4th grade reading level be executed? Alabama thinks so" by Anissa Latham-Brown, Ivana Hrynkiw
- 2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "ICE arrests in Alabama are spiking, even for children" by Anissa Latham-Brown, Hannah Denham
- 3rd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Unprecedented Times in the Iron Bowl: A Video Essay" by Laura Goldman, Nick Kelly

### Division B

- 1st Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "Football hype video" by Ana Sofia Meyer, Samuel Higgs, Audra Spears
- 2nd Place: The Cullman Tribune for "School bus hero - Colby Adams prevents a tragic accident" by Anabelle Howze
- 3rd Place: The Cullman Tribune for "Half Shell Oyster House" by Anabelle Howze

### Division C

- 1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Oak Mountain surrounds student battling cancer with love" by Tyler Raley
- 2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Leadership Shelby County kicks off new year" by Alec Etheredge

### Division D

- 1st Place: Selma Sun for "UWA unveils trail signage" by Cindy Fisher
- 2nd Place: The LaFayette Sun for "Chambers County Graduation Video" by Samantha Sweatman
- 3rd Place: Selma Sun for "DA speaks at middle school to curb violence" by Valencia Benjamin

### Division E

- 1st Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "ATF students practice arson investigation" by Jonathan Stinson
- 2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "All aboard: Model railroads connect generations" by Jonathan Stinson

3rd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Wreath Laying At Maple Hill" by Erin Elise Enyinda

## **Cat. 36 Best Use of Video (Longer than 2 minutes)**

### Division A

1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Whispers in the Weight Room" by Clay Yeager, Gabe Burggraf, Ben Flanagan

2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "American Shrapnel trailer" by Mila Oliveira, staff

### Division B

1st Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "Alex City Mayoral Debate" by staff

2nd Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "Jackson's Gap storm damage" by Cliff Williams

3rd Place: The Cullman Tribune for "Debate Series Livestream - City Council Place 1" by Dustin Isom, Noah Galilee, Janet Chandler

### Division C

1st Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Briarwood wins 10th state championship in school history" by Alec Etheredge

2nd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Oak Mountain completes Hail Mary to beat Pelham" by Alec Etheredge

3rd Place: Shelby County Reporter (Columbiana) for "Shelby County Hall of Fame Class of 2025 Ceremony" by Alec Etheredge

### Division D

1st Place: Selma Sun for "Good Samaritan nurses reunite" by Todd Prater

2nd Place: Selma Sun for "Parents start autism support group in Dallas County" by staff

### Division E

1st Place: The Trussville Tribune for "Tribune Unscripted" by staff

2nd Place: The Redstone Rocket (Huntsville) for "Veterans parade colors streets in red, white and blue" by Erin Elise Enyinda

## **Cat. 37 Best Community Event**

### Division A

1st Place: Alabama Media Group for "Birmingham Dreams" by staff

2nd Place: Alabama Media Group for "Mobile mayoral runoff debate" by staff

### Division B

1st Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "Alex City Debate"

2nd Place: The Clanton Advertiser for "Best of the Best Contest"

3rd Place: The Outlook (Alexander City) for "Halloween photos at The Outlook"

### Division C

1st Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "Best Places to Work"

2nd Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "Women's Summit"

3rd Place: Birmingham Business Journal for "40 Under 40"