**2026 WNPA BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST**
**NEWS DIVISION**

• **Submit a PDF of the full published page where the story appeared.** Links to e-editions or newspaper URLs not accepted (disqualifying). **If a story carries to a jump page, include all pages of the article in a single PDF for the entry.**
• **For all PDF files larger than 20MB,** save the file as a reduced size PDF to get it under the limit. If the file is still too large (multi-entries, for example) upload the files to a third-party site such as Issuu.com, Google Drive, etc. Enter the URL into the appropriate field when submitting your entry on the Better Newspaper Contest site. Please select the box **"allow download"** from the third-party site so judges may so judges your page(s) for viewing.
• **Title each entry with the article headline.**
• Entries must be the work of a staff writer or contributing writer.
• May submit up to five entries per person per category, except (#335, Editorial Pages where the limit is one entry per paper; and Writer of the Year categories #338, # 339 & #340 where the limit is one entry per person.)
• Each story is valid in only one category, except where noted below.
- Any story entered in the "**Writer of the Year"** categories, The **Newspaper Community Service Award** category or as part of a **Special Section** and may be submitted in one additional category

**Judges** will consider quality of reporting, clarity of writing, effectiveness of quotes, creativity, depth of research, and general interest to readers.

**#301: News Story, Long**
***Word count: 851 words or more.*** For each entry, submit a single non-deadline news story.
**Please verify your word count BEFORE entering.**

**#302: News Story, Short**
***Word count: up to 850 words.*** For each entry, submit a single non-deadline news story.
**Please verify your word count BEFORE entering.**

**#303: Breaking News Story**
Entries should reflect unscheduled events, for which no advance planning was possible, such as accidents, fires, natural disasters or other breaking news events. If coverage was in print only, submit your print entry as a full-page PDF. If coverage was initially online only, you may provide web screen shot(s) in one PDF.

**#304: Health or Medical Story**
For each entry, submit a single health or medical story.

**#305: Environmental Story**
For each entry, submit a single story about the environment. May include "green" stories.

**#306: Business News Story**
For each entry, submit a single business story. A news story about your local business community, such as a new firm arriving, significant expansion or change of leadership of an existing business, demise of an important business, or an event (natural catastrophe, fire, etc.) that dramatically affects business operations. Includes technology and agriculture. NOTE: Business Features are a separate category.

**#307: Education Story**
For each entry, submit a single education story.

**#308: Government Story**
For each entry, submit a single government story.

**#309: Crime and Court Story**
For each entry submit a single story on crime, law enforcement or a criminal or civil law topic. A police blotter is not accepted.

**#310: Social Issue Story**
For each entry submit a single news story related to race, human rights, poverty, immigration, homelessness/affordable housing, child care, aging, religion or similar issues as they directly affect your newspaper's community and its resources.

**#311: Election Story**
For each entry submit a single news story about an election. This may include election day results, debate coverage, public disclosure filings, or other topics related to political campaigns.

**#312: Sports News Story**
For each entry, submit a single sports story. General sporting news, including game coverage or any aspect of amateur or professional sports. Note: Sports Features and Sports Personality Profiles are separate categories.

**#313: Art Reviews**
For each entry, submit a single review of visual, literature or performing arts (art, music drama, dance, literature, movies/video). Note: Arts Feature or Story (which includes artist personality profiles) are a separate category.

**#314: News of the Weird**
Did you publish stories that prompted people to say, "Did you see that story today? Can you believe it?" Enter them here. Here are topics of past winners: Woman learns someone was living under her house; Human skull found at estate sale; Paranormal activity.

**#315: News Headline**
Each entry will include **ONE** story headline from a single writer. Judges will consider appropriateness, cleverness & originality of a headline for a photo caption, news story, feature, column, editorial, etc. Any story entered as a Headline may be submitted in one additional News category.

## FEATURE & PROFILE STORIES

**#316: General Feature Story, Long**
***Word count: 851 words or more.*** For each entry, submit a single human-interest feature story. Please verify your word count before entering. **Note**: Feature stories (any length) focused on Animals, History or the Arts are now entered in separate categories. **Please verify your word count BEFORE entering.**

**#317: General Feature Story, Short**
***Word count: up to 850 words.*** For each entry, submit a single feature story. For each entry, submit a single human-interest feature story. **Note**: Feature stories (any length) focused on Animals, History or the Arts are now entered in separate categories. **Please verify your word count BEFORE entering.**

**#318: Lifestyle Feature Story**
For each entry, submit a single lifestyle feature story or personality story. Include trend stories, leisure activities, family life, hobbies, food, fashion.

**#319: Business Feature Story**
For each entry, submit a single business feature. An in-depth look at a noteworthy business personality, analysis of a successful long-term business, local industry story, or economic trend that has a high impact in your area. Includes technology and agriculture.

**#320: Animal Feature Story**
For each entry, submit a single feature or profile on an animal or group of animals (wild, domestic, pets, etc.)

**#321: History Feature Story**
For each entry, submit a single feature or profile on a historical figure, place, building, etc.

**#322: Arts Feature or Story**
For each entry, submit a single story or feature on the visual arts, literature or performing arts (art, music drama, dance, literature, movies/video) including profile of the people who created them. **NOTE**: Do not include reviews or critiques, they compete in a separate category, Art Reviews #313.

**#323: Sports Feature**
For each entry, submit a single sports feature story. Human-interest stories about teams or other related features from the sports world. **NOTE:** Sports Personality Profile is a separate category.

**#324: Sports Personality Profile**
For each entry, submit a single story of a person in amateur or professional sports.

**#325: Personality Profile, Long**
***Word count: 851 words or more.*** For each entry, submit a single story about a person, family or public figure. **Please verify your word count BEFORE entering.**

**#326: Personality Profile, Short**
***Word count: up to 850 words***. For each entry, submit a single story about a person, family or public figure. **Please verify your word count BEFORE entering. NOTE:** Enter your profiles on Business, Sports, Arts, Animals or History in their respective "Feature" category.

**COMPREHENSIVE / INVESTIGATIVE CATEGORIES**

**#327: Comprehensive Coverage, Single Writer**
For each entry, submit two or more stories (up to five maximum) on a single community issue or news story. This includes any coverage labeled as a series. The entry may consist of representative stories, editorials and/or columns.
• In the ***Comments Field***, list story titles to direct Judges to appropriate story on the pages and explain your entry to judges (or include titles in an explanatory letter in your PDF).
• Include all stories in a **single PDF file,** then upload for judging**.**

**#328: Comprehensive Coverage, Multiple Writers**
For each entry, submit two or more stories (up to five maximum) on a single community issue or news story. This includes any coverage labeled as a series. If you wish, the entry may consist of representative stories, editorials and/or columns.
• In the ***Comments Field***, list story titles to direct Judges to appropriate story on the pages and explain your entry to judges (or include titles in an explanatory letter in your PDF).
• Include all stories in a **single PDF file,** then upload for judging**.**

**#329: Investigative Reporting**
For each entry, submit one or more stories (up to five maximum) containing information not readily available to the news media or public and obtained through reporter initiatives. Entries in this category will use an above average amount of interviewing, multiple sources, public records requests, data analysis, documentation and background research.
• In the ***Comments Field***, list story titles to direct Judges to appropriate story on the pages and explain your entry to judges (or include titles in an explanatory letter in your PDF).
• Include all stories in a **single PDF file,** then upload for judging**.**

**PAGE DESIGN CATEGORIES**
**NOTE:** one design award appears in the Advertising Division (#112 Classified pages).

**#330: Sports Page Design**
For each entry, submit the opening page of one sports section. *Note*: The Sports Page is not required to be a section front. Judges will consider the quality of design and content, quality of headlines, visual impact of art/photographs and placement of text.

**#331: Feature Page Design**
For each entry, submit the opening page of a lifestyle, feature, or arts & entertainment section. Note: The Feature Page is not required to be a section front, but it is limited to a single ROP page. Judges will consider the quality of design and content, quality of headlines, visual impact of art/photographs and placement of text.

**#332: Front Page Design**
For each entry, submit a single front page. Judges will consider the quality of design and content, range of stories, quality of headlines, visual impact of art/photographs and placement of text.

## EDITORIALS AND COLUMNS

**#333: Editorials**
For each entry, submit an editorial. One column is one entry.

**#334: Editorial Cartoon**
For each entry, submit a single cartoon drawn by a member of the newspaper staff, or local contributor. Custom cartoons drawn by a syndicated cartoonist to be printed in your paper only are allowed. Use the ***Comments Field*** to explain to judges how the cartoon relates to your community. Judges are from outside the state and probably not familiar with local issues depicted in the cartoon.

**#335: Editorial Pages**
All editorial pages from two issues make up an entry. One entry per paper. For each entry, submit two examples of your editorial or opinion pages. Entries do not need to be published consecutively. Judges will consider strength of editorial leadership as shown by local opinion pieces; local interest as shown by letters to the editor, guest columns and page design. (One entry fee covers both sets of pages.) Include all pages in a **single PDF file,** then upload for judging**.**

**#336: General Interest Column**
Three columns make up an entry. Columns must have by-lines or standing headings and must be regularly published in your newspaper. NOTE: This category now includes Humorous Column entries. Entries do not need to be published consecutively. (Editorials, even signed editorials, are not columns and will not be judged as a column.) Judges will consider writing style, originality and reader impact. Judges will consider writing style, originality and reader impact. (One entry fee covers all three columns.) Include all pages in a **single PDF file,** then upload for judging**.**

**#337: Topical Columns**
Three columns make up an entry. Columns must have bylines or standing headings, and must be regularly published in your newspaper on topics such as Gardening, Sports, Travel, Pop Culture, Food/Wine, etc. Entries do not need to be published consecutively. (One entry fee covers all three columns.) Include all 3 columns in a **single PDF file,** then upload for judging.

## WRITER OF THE YEAR CATEGORY INSTRUCTIONS

• **Limit one entry per person**, per category.
• **Submit full-page PDFs** where the story appeared, then package into one single PDF for portfolio submission. If the PDF file is larger than 20 MB, save the compiled file as reduced size to get it under the limit.
• Note that any story or column entered as part of a “Writer of the Year” may be submitted in one additional news category.

**#338: Feature Writer of the Year**
Enter your **five** best feature stories**. List each story headline in *Comments Field*** to help judges identify your work on each submitted page. Package all five stories in **a single PDF**. Open competition across all circulation groups.

**#339: Sports Writer of the Year**
Enter your **five** best sports stories (columns, features, and/or regular reporting, five pieces in all). **List each story headline in *Comments Field*** to help judges identify your work on each submitted page. Package all five stories in **a single PDF**. Open competition across all circulation groups.

**#340: News Writer of the Year**
Enter your **five** best news stories. **List each story headline in *Comments Field*** to help judges identify your work on each submitted page. Package all five stories in **a single PDF**. Open competition across all circulation groups.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE**
**REMINDER: Community Service Award. Entries must describe how the effort impacted the public good.**

**#341: Newspaper Community Service Award**
The project entry may consist of:

1. **Both news content and advertising material; OR**
2. **Only advertising material; OR**
3. **Only news content.**

This award goes to a newspaper staff or individual who fulfills a newspaper's responsibility to use enterprise or initiative to advance the public good. Entries will be judged by the newspaper's willingness to commit resources, the effort involved, the initiative shown and the impact of the project. Open competition across all circulation groups.

**INSTRUCTIONS: Enter at least two items (maximum 5) to document your project.**
Entries may include advertisements, news stories, editorials, letters, features, cartoons or photographs to document the project. Items submitted in this entry may be submitted in one additional advertising or news category.

**You must briefly describe the newspaper's initiative and its impact in the community** (use the Comments field to submit a separate Word doc with the entry). Impact could be measured by public involvement in the project, response generated by the community (letters to editors, attendance at an event, donations, e.g.) or other benefits to the public or its institutions.

**UPLOAD: Package** all items in a single PDF. If the PDF file is larger than 20MB, save the compiled file as reduced size. If it's still larger than 20 MB upload the PDF to a third-party site such as Issuu.com, Google Drive, etc. Enter the third-party URL into the appropriate field when submitting your entry on the Better Newspaper site.

Include headlines, captions or other key identifiers of submitted materials in the Comments Field, so judges can easily find your entries on the packaged pages.

**#342: Year in Review (NEW)**
Looking back at the year. Could be a special section or ROP. This is not an advertising Best Of section. This is a collection of stories looking back at the year and choosing what was impactful in your community.