

2025 Oklahoma SPJ Contest Awards

RADIO AWARDS

Radio Outstanding Producer (Portfolio)

Second place: Sierra Pfeifer, KOSU - "Sierra Pfeifer production portfolio"

First place: Jim Johnson, KGOU - Radio - "Jim Johnson - KGOU program director"

Judges' comments: "A solid and well-rounded portfolio, encompassing everything from features on musicians to conversations with policymakers. The musician features were particularly strong, with good use of natural sound to draw the listener into the story and keep their attention throughout." | "Clear presentation of five interesting feature stories. Pfeiffer excels at painting a picture for listeners such as her description of a prison inmate's eyes."

Radio Outstanding Host/Moderator/Anchor

Honorable Mention: Nyk Daniels, KGOU - Radio - "Outstanding anchor - Nyk Daniels"

Third place: Dick Pryor, KGOU - Radio - "Dick Pryor - Capitol Insider host"

Second place: Michael Cross, KOSU - "Michael Cross portfolio"

First place: Ben Abrams, KWGS-FM - "Ben Abrams host links"

Judges' comments: "Solid work as an anchor, coupled with polished and professional interviews. Abrams has a polite interviewing style that allows his guests to be the star of the segment."

Radio Outstanding Discussion Program/Series or Segment

Third place: Michael Cross, Neva Hill, Ryan Kiesel, KOSU - "This Week in Oklahoma Politics"

Second place: Dick Pryor, Shawn Ashley, KGOU - Radio - "Capitol Insider: Market signs are good for state but workforce hinders Oklahoma economy"

First place: Elizabeth Caldwell, Zach Boblitt, KWGS-FM - "Tishomingo grapples with racist incident at high school"

Judges' comments: "Nice conversational tone between the host and reporter that sounded like two friends talking and made this interesting to listen to. Generous use of field tape."

Radio Outstanding Sports Story

Second place: Sarah Liese, KOSU - "Potawatomi Fire close out undefeated season with TBL crown"

First place: Ben Abrams, KWGS-FM - "After fleeing Afghanistan, a young soccer star finds his footing in Tulsa"

Judges' comments: "This is a great human interest story from the world of sports. The reporting and narration was clear, and free from bias. Abrams allowed Haidari to tell his story--and that carries the piece."

Radio Outstanding News Story

Honorable Mention: Max Bryan, KWGS-FM - "Broken Arrow police bring mental health specialists to crisis calls"

Third place: Jillian Taylor, StateImpact Oklahoma - "'This is going to kill us': Oklahoma nursing homes brace for new federal staffing mandate"

Second place: Lionel Ramos, KOSU - "Immigration bill sent to governor as Latino Oklahomans protest"

First place: Jillian Taylor, StateImpact Oklahoma - "Surgery during 'rocket attacks': Ukrainian doctors train at OU Health to provide reconstructive care"

Overall judges' comments: "I enjoyed these pieces very much as stories in and of themselves and as important news for the community for which they were written as well as for everyone."

Radio Outstanding Documentary or Special Program

First place: Focus: Black Oklahoma Staff, KOSU - "Focus: Black Oklahoma"

Judges' comments: "This episode of Focus: Black Oklahoma is engaging, well-produced, and socially resonant. It succeeds in weaving together hard-hitting political journalism with compassionate and celebratory cultural reporting."

Radio Outstanding Online Reporting

Honorable Mention: Cait Kelley, KOSU - "TikTok: State Question 832 signatures turned in"

Third place: Elizabeth Caldwell, KWGS-FM - "Autopsy for Native teen found in well on former top cop's ranch brings no answers"

Second place: Beth Wallis, StateImpact Oklahoma - "Oklahoma's Education Department awarded teachers life-changing bonuses - and created a nightmare for some by demanding them back"

First place: Jillian Taylor, StateImpact Oklahoma - "'I hope it makes a huge difference': What \$23 million in opioid settlement funds could mean for Oklahomans"

Judges' comments: "This is a truly fantastic deep dive into how funds from legal settlements with opioid distributors, manufacturers and retailers may touch lives impacted by the fentanyl crisis in Oklahoma through responsible spending of funds towards boosting prevention, treatment, and awareness."

Overall judges' comments: "This category was filled with entrants arguably at the top of their field in radio in Oklahoma. Nearly all of the participants displayed a keen eye for detail in both their original radio broadcasts and the accompanying articles or social media posts, and they also showed the various facets of their storytelling skills through fact and data-driven accounts of an array of difficult issues across the state. From the disappearance and unsolved death of yet another Native teen, to the state's mishandling of a bonus program meant to address a teacher shortage, to potential opioid settlement funds making an impact in Oklahoma as the fentanyl crisis ravages local youth, it was all very compelling and ultimately a hard decision to make. But each winner chosen is deserving of their recognition and I applaud all entrants for their dedication to journalism on the radio and in print, as well as for their fine-tuned submissions this year."

Radio Outstanding Feature

Honorable Mention: Max Bryan, KWGS-FM - "Morello: Woody Guthrie was 'the original punk rocker'"

Third place: Zach Boblitt, KWGS-FM - "Green Country Pagans celebrate Yule amid state leaders' criticism of beliefs"

Second place: Beth Wallis, StateImpact Oklahoma - "From caves to caterpillars: How Oklahoma schools are working to beat the 'summer slide'"

First place: Rachel Hopkin, KGOU - Radio - "How did Oklahoma become the location of a real-life Lord of the Flies?"

Judges' comments: "This is an excellent exploration of a complex experiment in human nature. It asks good questions, not accepting answers at face value. This complex story is explained well, using archival material and interviews."

Radio Outstanding Newscast

Third place: Nyk Daniels, KGOU - Radio - "AM NewsBrief: Nov. 6, 2024"

Second place: Michael Cross, KOSU Staff, KOSU - "The KOSU Daily: July 25, 2024"

First place: Deborah Shaar, KGOU - Radio - "PM NewsBrief: Oct. 17, 2024"

Judges' comments: "Clear & concise writing that is conversational and relatable in tone."

Radio Outstanding Extended Form News Story or Series (In-Depth)

First place: Lionel Ramos, KOSU - "Immigration in Oklahoma coverage"

Overall judges' comments: "The writing competition was quite informative. All of the entries raised awareness regarding issues that impact the community in Oklahoma."

Radio Outstanding Use of Sound

Second place: Elizabeth Caldwell, KWGS-FM - "He fights in honor of his brother who died at 32. He just won his first pro fight"

Judges' comments: "The natural audio is deeply immersive—Terrance's voice resonates with vulnerability and strength, and the ambient gym noise never overpowers but enhances. The mix

is balanced, and moments of silence are used to amplify emotional weight, particularly when Terrance reflects on his brother."

First place: Anna Pope, KOSU - "At America's longest-running Black rodeo, 'real cowgirls and cowboys' carry on a rich history"

Judges' comments: "Anna Pope's sound design is confident and intentional. She resists overproduction, trusting the field audio's richness to drive storytelling. The result is an immersive piece where sound conveys history, pride, grit, and joy."

Overall judges' comments: "The entries demonstrated creative and purposeful use of sound elements—including ambient noise, music, voice layering, and natural soundscapes—to deepen listener engagement and enhance emotional impact. From intimate personal narratives to vibrant cultural scenes, the winning pieces used sound not just as a backdrop but as a storytelling device that transported audiences into the heart of the story."

Radio Outstanding Investigative Reporting

Third place: Brianna Bailey, Sierra Pfeifer, KOSU Radio and The Frontier - "Convicted of murder as a teenager, Wayne Thompson hopes for a second chance at freedom" *Judges' comments:* "Thorough research and personal storytelling make this a standout piece in investigative journalism."

Second place: Beth Wallis, StateImpact Oklahoma - "Offering AP courses is now required in Oklahoma, but most schools still aren't teaching them" *Judges' comments:* "Beth Wallis's report investigates the gap between state mandates and actual implementation in Oklahoma's education system. By highlighting the disparity in AP course offerings, the story underscores issues of equity and access in education. The piece is well-researched and effectively uses data to support its findings."

First place: Elizabeth Caldwell, KWGS-FM - "The prosecutor who put her away says she should be free, but she's still in prison in Oklahoma" *Judges' comments:* "Elizabeth Caldwell's report delivers a compelling narrative that intertwines personal tragedy with systemic injustice. By focusing on Cathy Lamb's case, where the prosecutor who convicted her now advocates for her release, the story highlights potential miscarriages of justice and the complexities of the legal system. The in-depth interviews and exploration of the case's nuances provide a powerful examination of the intersection between law and morality."

Overall judges' comments: "Across the board, these entries demonstrated rigorous research, compelling storytelling, and a strong commitment to accountability journalism."

Radio Outstanding Interview

Second place: Ben Abrams, KWGS-FM - "Outgoing Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum reflects on immigration, struggle for racial equity during term"

First place: Logan Layden, KGOU - Radio - "Former Oklahoma Congressman Mickey Edwards on the state of American politics and discourse"

Judges' comments: "Smart, historically grounded, and urgent. A strong, high-level political conversation."

Radio Outstanding Reporter (Portfolio)

Second place: Jillian Taylor, StateImpact Oklahoma - "Outstanding reporter - Jillian Taylor"

First place: Hannah France, KGOU - Radio - "Outstanding Reporter - Hannah France"

Radio Outstanding Spot News (Includes Live Coverage)

Honorable Mention: Graycen Wheeler, KOSU - "Oklahoma City pulls water from Canton Lake to replenish parched Lake Hefner"

Third place: Ben Abrams, KWGS-FM - "Lankford: GOP colleagues said 'we should have passed that' immigration bill"

Second place: Anna Pope, KOSU - "Deadly tornadoes in Oklahoma leave thousands without power, trail of damage"

First place: Ben Abrams, KWGS-FM - "Tribal leaders send message on Native American Day: vote"

Radio Outstanding Editing (Audio Production)

Honorable Mention: Rachel Hopkin, KGOU - Radio - "Was the shopping cart invented in Oklahoma?"

Third place: Elizabeth Caldwell, KWGS-FM - "Surrounded by friends and family, oldest Tulsa Race Massacre survivor turns 110"

Second place: Sierra Pfeifer, KOSU - "Tulsa Opera harnesses the healing power of music for memory care"

First place: Beth Wallis, StateImpact Oklahoma - "Transgender Oklahomans, allies look to music for community, catharsis"

Radio Outstanding Weather Coverage

First place: Anna Pope, KOSU - "Deadly tornadoes in Oklahoma leave thousands without power, trail of damage"

Judges' comments: "Solid reporting with usable information that was of importance to the audience. Thorough in its details and a perfect example of weather coverage."

TELEVISION AWARDS

TV Outstanding Extended Form News Story or Series (In-Depth)

Second place: Spencer Humphrey, Isaac Korstjens, KFOR-TV - "Do we really need to politicize THIS?"

First place: Adam Pursch, Kathy Damrill, Wendy Soares, Scott Noland, KOKH - "Public \$ Promoting Ryan Walters' Image"

Judges' comments: "This is what being the public 'watch dog' is all about. Solid research and reporting."

Overall judges' comments: "Two great entries, hard to decided a winner."

TV Outstanding News Story

First place: Spencer Humphrey, Joseph Ross, KFOR-TV - ""I am in an office""

TV Outstanding Reporter (Portfolio)

Second place: Spencer Humphrey, KFOR-TV, "Spencer Humphrey Finds The Truth In 2024"

First place: Wendy Soares, KOKH - "Wendy Soares - Reporting"

TV Outstanding Producer (Portfolio)

First place: Kathy Damrill, KOKH - "Kathy Damrill - Producing"

TV Outstanding Investigative Reporting

Second place: Adam Pursch, Kathy Damrill, Wendy Soares, Scott Noland, KOKH - "Who's Really Running Oklahoma Schools?"

First place: Spencer Humphrey, Isaac Korstjens, KFOR-TV - "The State Superintendent Did WHAT?" *Judges' comments:* "An important story impacting all of Oklahoma."

TV Outstanding Online Reporting

First place: Adam Pursch, Kathy Damrill, Wendy Soares, Alexandra Sharfman, KOKH - "Who's Really Running Oklahoma Schools?"

TV Outstanding Discussion Program/Series or Segment

First place: Adam Pursch, Kathy Damrill, Colby Daniels, T.J. Eckert, KOKH - "The End Zone"

Judges' comments: "Well structured for the fan and non-fan alike. Each segment lays out what will be explained, then explains it well. There's a lot of enthusiasm, but there is always a good journalistic balance."

PRINT AWARDS

Print Outstanding Newspaper Story/Photo Essay

Third place: Chad Hunter, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "Indigenous Day bash catches on"

Second place: Chad Hunter, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "Cultural gathering captivates youth"

First place: Sam Levrault, Ross D. Johnson, Oklahoma Eagle - "2025_SPJ_Eagle_Oklahoma"

Judges' comments: "This photo essay shows a cohesive style of shooting while displaying a solid variety of the action that was happening. Great composition and technical skill are both showcased as well as a comfort and familiarity with the subject matter."

Print Outstanding Video

Third place: Victoria Anderson, Gaylord News - "Historic End for Harris campaign at Howard"

Second place: Micah Fletcher, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "Generations of dirt tracking: Muskrat continues family's racing legacy"

First place: Stacie Boston, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "Emotional RTR riders visit Mantle Rock"

Judges' comments: "Nice camerawork. Respectful coverage of an emotional topic. Artfully produced."

Print Outstanding Magazine Page Design

Honorable Mention: Madeline Crawford, TulsaPeople - ""Bringing the heat"" *Judges' comments:* "The first page was a standout."

Third place: Marissa Perez, Curbside Chronicle - "SNAP Stories" *Judges' comments:* "Great work collecting and displaying data."

Second place: Nathan Poppe, Curbside Chronicle - "WHERE HAVE ALL THE COWBOYS GONE" *Judges' comments:* "Nice page placement and captivating pictures."

First place: Nathan Poppe, Curbside Chronicle - "PIT COUNT DATA SPREAD" *Judges' comments:* "Great job condensing a lot of information into easy to understand graphics."

Overall judges' comments: "Overall, the entries were eye-catching. A very talented pool of applicants. Great job!"

Print Outstanding Profile

Third place: Heide Brandes, Cowboys & Indians - "Corn Dance: Loretta Barrett Oden's Inspired First American Cuisine"

Second place: Will Chavez, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "WE SERVED: Starr served as Army 'dustoff' pilot during Vietnam War"

First place: Heide Brandes, NonDoc Media - "Melvin Moran - the Oilman with a Heart of Gold"

Overall judges' comments: "PRIZE WINNER in Feature Writing to Heide Brandes for her empathetic and informative portrait of the Oklahoma oilman, Seminole supporter and Jewish-American philanthropist Melvin Moran. SECOND PRIZE WINNER in Feature Writing to Will Chavez for his vivid, compelling portrait of Rex Earl Starr, a Cherokee Nation Army pilot who evacuated countless numbers of American soldiers wounded in Vietnam. THIRD PRIZE WINNER in Feature Writing to Heide Brandes for her passionate portrait of Loretta Barrett Oden and the Indigenous chef's colorful celebrations of First American cuisine."

Print Outstanding Magazine Story

Honorable Mention: Nathan Poppe, Curbside Chronicle - "SNAP Stories"

Third place: Heide Brandes, Cowboys & Indians - "Leaders of the Pack"

Second place: Tim Landes, Staff, TulsaPeople - ""Cain's 100th anniversary""

First place: Nathan Poppe, Curbside Chronicle - "ALL RISE"

Print Outstanding Podcast

First place: Oklahoma Watch Staff, Oklahoma Watch - "Long Story Short"

Judges' comments: "Oklahoma Watch's 'Long Story Short' weekly podcasts allow reporters to give a bit more back story and nuance to the news they are covering. Ted Streuli guides the discussion and keeps it moving. A 'must listen' for Oklahoma News junkies."

Print Outstanding Web Design

Third place: Cherokee Phoenix, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "Cherokee Phoenix Website"

Judges' comments: "Clean, easy to read design with strong photo elements. Lots of great content. Wonderful news resource. Wish there was a story archives by byline or reporter."

Second place: Julie Jones, Umer Bilal, Gaylord News - "Voices of Resilience" *Judges' comments:* "Voices of Resilience is a fantastic reporting effort in both concept and execution. Easy navigation through this special project. Lots of great content. Strong photo/graphic elements with easy to read text. (I could not access the photo gallery section.) Nice selection of Wordpress theme for effective presentation."

First place: The Oklahoma Eagle, Oklahoma Eagle - "2025_SPJ_Eagle_Oklahoma SPJ Awards_47 - Print Outstanding Web Design" *Judges' comments:* "Beautiful design. Strong photos and graphics. Great use of white space for an uncluttered feel. Easy to navigate. Cohesive design throughout."

Print Outstanding Investigative Report

Honorable Mention: Blake Douglas, NonDoc Media - "'Systemic failure': Edmond residents sought help for Ross Norwood weeks before police shooting"

Judges' comments: "The reporter dissected the police shooting of a deranged man and used the case to examine the failure of the state's system to deal with the mentally ill needing emergency response. The reporting was probing, thorough, and evenhanded way. Fine job."

Third place: Ruby Topalian, Oklahoma Watch - "Pay or Your Son Dies"

Judges' comments: "Prisons have many problems, and excellent reporting has been done about them, including in another entry in this contest. This story, though, revealed a little known yet growing problem: extortion of the families of inmates using cell phones illegally sneaked into Oklahoma prisons. The extent of the problem was shocking, but the reporter humanized it with descriptive examples. She also detailed possible solutions as well as their associated drawbacks. Nicely done."

Second place: Jennifer Palmer, Paul Monies, Heather Warlick, Oklahoma Watch - "State Education Department Seeks Bids for 55,000 Classroom Bibles"

Judges' comments: "Smart digging resulted in a national scoop as the reporters on this story disclosed that Oklahoma's bid specifications to buy classroom Bibles were rigged to force purchase of Lee Greenwood's God Bless the U.S.A. Bible, the expensive Bible endorsed by President Trump and for which he receives an endorsement fee. The story included rich context, pointed but civil criticism of the deal, and abundant opportunity for the official involved to try to present a defense. An excellent example of the importance of examining documents and not taking government process at face value."

First place: Brianna Bailey, The Frontier - "Medical Marijuana Is Legal, But Oklahoma Is Charging Women for Using It While Pregnant"

Judges' comments: "The reporter did a very nifty job of eviscerating a routine practice of charging women with child neglect if they legally used marijuana during pregnancy. An extensive search of the records revealed that the practice was not uncommon in Oklahoma and identified several such cases. Thoughtful analysis and expert reaction showed flaws in the practices of police, prosecutors and social workers involved in the cases. The story was humanized with a compelling example, and data showed how the poor were especially affected. The story got immediate results, prompting change in practice in a jurisdiction that had been particularly aggressive in threatening to put new moms in prison for life for legally smoking pot. Well done."

Overall judges' comments: "Several good entries in this category, and the competition for the top spots was especially fierce. Very encouraging to see this level of investigative reporting happening today in Oklahoma."

Print Outstanding Spot News

Third place: Dylan Goforth, The Frontier - "The death of nonbinary teen shines a national spotlight on Oklahoma's anti-LGBTQ+ policies" *Judges' comments:* "Really like the sensitivity with which this story was written about a nonbinary woman."

Second place: Andrea Hancock, Tres Savage, NonDoc Media - "'Help me': Feds charge 6, DA charges 2 in Garvin County Jail death" *Judges' comments:* "Good job reporting on a woman's death after being mistreated in jail by employees when she already had medical problems that needed attending upon arrival."

First place: Tristan Loveless, Michael Duncan, NonDoc Media - "Jury: The Oklahoman libeled Scott Sapulpa, owes him at least \$5 million"

Judges' comments: "Well-written story on a successful libel suit of a former high school football coach against The Oklahoman for misidentifying the coach with making a facial slur that was broadcast by another individual. Lots of drama to the few people around the courthouse waiting for the verdict to laying out in simple terms what the issues were that led to the coach being relieved of his job and now unemployable in any high profile position."

Overall judges' comments: "I learned a lot about the Indian government and culture in some of these stories. Enjoyed the opportunity."

Print Outstanding Website (Overall)

Third place: Peggy Dodd, Oklahoma Daily (Univ. of Oklahoma) - "OU Daily"

Second place: The Frontier, The Frontier - "The Frontier"

First place: Tres Savage, Garron Rose - "www.nondoc.com" *Judges' comments:* "Strong coverage and lots of it, easy navigation, and clean design make NonDoc a winner for its readers. In addition to the robust news coverage, the public resources area is great, the site search is fast, and effort around newsletters help glue readers to the organization's coverage. Sundaze Comics is a special. The biggest shortcoming of NonDoc is a strong photojournalism presence. Hopefully, that's in its future."

Overall judges' comments: "Despite the challenges and upheavals in the media landscape, these entries bear witness to a thriving, vibrant and reader focused journalism in Oklahoma. These organizations are exploring new ways of covering and supporting news grounded in traditional journalist values. We wish them luck for we need them."

Print Outstanding Newspaper Photography

Second place: Kyletta Ray, Southwest Ledger - "City of Lawton's '40 Wins for the Citizens' street improvement program"

First place: Basil Childers, Oklahoma Eagle - "2025_SPJ_Eagle_Oklahoma SPJ Awards_54 - Print Outstanding Newspaper Photography" *Judges' comments:* "First Place: Captured a nice moment as the candidate was speaking to supporters. Provided context in the photo of the surroundings."

Print Outstanding Spot News Photography

Second place: Mike W. Ray, Southwest Ledger - "Westwin protestors disrupt Lawton City Council meeting"

First place: Willie Gillespie - "Car thief" *Judges' comments:* "Great moment of a 'perp walk.' Right time, right place."

Print Outstanding Online Story

Honorable Mention: Anusha Fathepure, Oklahoma Daily (Univ. of Oklahoma) - "NEDC contractor confirms offering OU students pay to attend council's key entertainment district meetings" *Judges' comments:* "Great example of conflict of interest and power abuse to push a certain agenda unfairly."

Third place: Bennett Brinkman, NonDoc Media - "'Forced' out after drag drama, Shane Murnan rejects Western Heights' confidentiality agreement" *Judges' comments:* "Well written and researched to show the detail of an issue and the impact on real people."

Second place: Kayden Anderson, Gaylord News - "Puerto Rico women have better access to maternity care than do Oklahoma women" *Judges' comments:* "Excellent reporting on an issue of debate done with care, detail and data to back up the human side of the story."

First place: Dylan Goforth, The Frontier - "Sold out: The rise and fall of America's most ambitious sports media company" *Judges' comments:* "Great insight and depth to an important issue that often goes unnoticed. Sharp detail and specifics."

Overall judges' comments: "Many great entries and made it tough to choose among them. All deserve credit and support."

Print Outstanding Feature

Honorable Mention: Ross D. Johnson, Oklahoma Eagle - "'It Was What People Do.'"

Third place: Matt Patterson, NonDoc Media - "Housing Series"

Second place: James Finck, Southwest Ledger - "American Civics 101"

First place: Nathan Poppe, Curbside Chronicle - "SNAP Stories" *Judges' comments:* "In an enormous category with stellar work, this entry stood out because of the creativity used to present hard facts about an often-vilified benefit."

Print Outstanding General News

Honorable Mention: Miguel Rios, Curbside Chronicle - "WINTER SHELTER UPDATE"

Third place: Ashlynd Huffman, The Frontier - "Oklahoma cops can still use training banned in other states after allegations it promotes violence and illegal tactics"

Second place: Kayla Branch, The Frontier - "Some Oklahoma parents turn kids over to the state after struggling to get mental health care for them"

First place: Chad Hunter, Cherokee Phoenix - "Gilcrease Museum repatriates Cherokee Advocate printing press to tribe"

Print Outstanding Sports Photography

Third place: Micah Fletcher, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "CN citizen Chaney Helton closes out fall camp, readies for freshman season with Sooners"

Second place: Sutton Spinner, Oklahoma Daily (Univ. of Oklahoma) - "OU pitcher"

First place: Kelly Wray, Duncan Banner - "Duncan Noon Lions Open Rodeo saddles up for one more night"

Judges' comments: "Captures the action well with excellent composition and timing. Gives an intimate look at a sport many people are unfamiliar with."

Print Outstanding Sports Report

Honorable Mention: D. Sean Rowley, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "Vazquez wins state Golden Gloves title"

Third place: Micah Fletcher, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "CN citizen Chaney Helton closes out fall camp, readies for freshman season with Sooners"

Second place: Will Chavez, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "Former cross country, track star embraces new challenge at XTERRA World Championship"

Judges' comments: "All sports writing is story-telling of not what the athletes do but who they are. This story met that purpose, as did the third place and honorable mention winners. Good work by all."

First place: Dylan Goforth, The Frontier - "Sold out: The rise and fall of America's most ambitious sports media company"

Judges' comments: "This story examined both the precarious state of sports journalism and betrayal for a former colleague. Very well-written with multiple interviews and details of how a doomed venture was executed."

Print Outstanding Column/Commentary

Third place: James Finck, Southwest Ledger - "Father, son give insightful review of Temple Grandin"

Second place: Connie Cronley, TulsaPeople - ""For those who have had a bumpy year""

First place: Mindy Ragan Wood, Southwest Ledger - "How the auto industry lost me as a customer (at least for now)"

Judges' comments: "Mindy Reagan Wood connects with a common frustration of tech-filled cars breaking and the repairs being beyond the skills and tools of the car repair DIYer. But what makes the column special is the glimpses of her father and his cars and pickup and how that influenced her views. It's a delightful layer on top of her theme. Great writing."

Print Outstanding Page 1 Newspaper Layout and Design

Honorable Mention: Southwest Ledger Staff, Southwest Ledger - "SWL 10-1-24 Page One"

Third place: Southwest Ledger Staff, Southwest Ledger - "SWL 2-13-24 Page One"

Second place: Southwest Ledger Staff, Southwest Ledger - "SWL 3-19-24 Page one"

First place: Mark Dreadfulwater, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "Cherokee Phoenix Page1 layout and design" *Judges' comments:* "Visuals now dominate print news, and the Page 1 layout of the Cherokee Phoenix demonstrates clearly that they 'get it,' with a perfect balance of visual and textual elements, and an excellent use of white space. Outstanding work!"

Print Outstanding Magazine Photography

Third place: Nathan Poppe, Curbside Chronicle - "BEHIND THE COUNT"

Second place: Michelle Pollard, TulsaPeople - ""Fruits of their labor""

First place: Nathan Poppe, Curbside Chronicle - "COLD SNAP" *Judges' comments:* "Captures the subject well and has a good variety. Effectively tells the story."

Print Outstanding Magazine

Third place: Peggy Dodd, Oklahoma Daily (Univ. of Oklahoma) - "OU Daily Spring Magazine"

Second place: Staff, TulsaPeople - "2024 TulsaPeople Magazine"

First place: Curbside Staff, Curbside Chronicle - "CURBSIDE CHRONICLE"

Judges' comments: "Great reporting. Very interesting design and layout. Full of excellent information for the community."

Print Outstanding Review

Second place: Mike W. Ray, Southwest Ledger - "Reviewing Ben MacFarlane's 'Cruise Ship SOS'"

First place: Mike W. Ray, Southwest Ledger - "'Deadlines' tells about life as a small-town journalist" *J*

Judges' comments: "Very interesting and a great read. The author of the piece really took the reader inside the book with unique perspectives."

Print Reporter of the Year

Third place: Peggy Dodd, Oklahoma Daily (Univ. of Oklahoma) - "Peggy Dodd"

Second place: Miguel Rios, Curbside Chronicle - "Miguel Rios"

First place: Bobby Ross Jr., Christian Chronicle - "Bobby Ross Jr. stories"

Judges' comments: "Mr. Ross' entries are all examples of clean, concise, classic journalism, refreshingly 'just the facts.' Very well done."

Print Outstanding Newspaper

Second place: Southwest Ledger Staff, Southwest Ledger - "2-13-24, 11-19-24"

First place: Cherokee Phoenix, Cherokee Phoenix - Newsp A - "Cherokee Phoenix" *Judges' comments:* "The Cherokee Phoenix is an impressive journalistic endeavor that provides the community it serves with the information it needs make informed decisions, utilizing state-of-the-art layout and design techniques to create maximum visual appeal. It is an outstanding publication."

Print Outstanding Magazine Story/Photo Essay

Third place: Nathan Poppe, Curbside Chronicle - "PAWS EVERYTHING"

Second place: AJ Stegall, Curbside Chronicle - "RAINBOW MOSAIC"

First place: Jackson Adair, Curbside Chronicle - "WHERE HAVE ALL THE COWBOYS GONE"

Judges' comments: "This set of portraits have a cohesive style and feel, but each one tells a different story. Beautiful photos that portray an intimate understanding of the personalities of the subjects."

Print Photographer of the Year

Second place: Sarah Liese, KOSU - "Sarah Liese portfolio"

First place: Nathan Poppe, Curbside Chronicle - "Nathan Poppe"

Judges' comments: "This photographer shows an adaptability that is invaluable in journalism. Good technical ability and composition go a long way, but the storytelling within these images elevate the whole collection."

Print Outstanding Magazine Illustration/Graphic

Third place: Todd Clark, Curbside Chronicle - "CARING FOR HAIR"

Second place: Sydni Nasada, Curbside Chronicle - "TASTES LIKE HOME"

First place: Ashley Guerrero, TulsaPeople - ""For those who have had a bumpy year""

Judges' comments: "Well-constructed graphic with a retro feel that is at the same time poignant."

Print Outstanding Magazine Cover

Third place: Madeline Crawford, Michelle Pollard, Tim Landes, Anne Brockman, TulsaPeople - "November 2024"

Second place: Sam Washburn, Curbside Chronicle - "THE ZOO ISSUE"

First place: Madeline Crawford, Greg Bollinger, TulsaPeople - "June 2024"

Judges' comments: "Clean layout with the eye drawn to vibrant and crisp colors."

Print Outstanding Newspaper Graphic Illustration

First place: The Oklahoma Eagle, Oklahoma Eagle - "2025_SPJ_Eagle_Oklahoma SPJ Awards_52 - Print Outstanding Newspaper Graphic Illustration"

Judges' comments: "This graphic presentation hits you like a punch, really driving home the story and the issues related to sexual abuse. However, it's not gratuitous. The simple black and white with the 'torn' headlines set against the visual of the back of a girl's head makes a powerful visual. Great job to this designer."

Print Outstanding Newspaper Story

Third place: Mike W. Ray, Southwest Ledger - "Felony charge filed against Kiowa County cattleman"

Second place: Gary Lee, Oklahoma Eagle - "Following The Passing Of Nex Benedict, Serious Questions Linger"

First place: Jennifer Palmer, Oklahoma Watch - "State Seeks to Decertify Teacher Over 5-Year-Old Instagram Family Photo" *Judges' comments:* "Great setup. Stark contrasts between teacher and superintendent. Sharp legal commentary brings home free speech issue for readers."

PUBLIC RELATIONS AWARDS

PR Outstanding Graphics

First place: Jenny Lee, Adam Cohen, Anna Heigh, Casey Maxwell, OMRF - "2023 Annual Report"

Judges' comments: "I have read and edited a lot of annual reports, and the majority are something only someone internal would open and read. This is the exception with a fresh look, vibrant colors, excellent presentation and engaging content. Very, very well done."

PR Outstanding Video

First place: Micah Fletcher, Cherokee Phoenix , "CN citizen Chaney Helton closes out fall camp, readies for freshman season with Sooners"

Judges' comments: "Engaging video that was well done - live action is never easy to capture - that focused on a player who is Cherokee and her connection to her home state and an iconic softball program."

PR Outstanding Newsletter

First place: Jenny Lee, Kate Miller, Tony Thornton, Casey Maxwell, Adam Cohen, OMRF - "Bunsen Burner"

PR Outstanding Promotional Material

First place: Jenny Lee, Conor Dardis, OMRF - "Tommy James and the Shondells"

PR Outstanding Publication

Second place: Fiorella Zoll, Chris Thompson, Susan Parks-Schlepp, Jon Trudgeon, okschoolreadiness.org - "OPSR 2024 Annual Report"

First place: Adam Cohen, Jenny Lee, Kate Miller, Tony Thonton, Casey Maxwell, OMRF - "Findings Magazine"

PR Outstanding Social Media

First place: Chris Thompson, Scott O'Daniel, Susan Parks-Schlepp, Emily Lang, Charlie Price, Price Lang Consulting - "Accounting firm hiring campaign"

PR Outstanding Campaign

First place: Ghost Cat, Mikala Novitsky, Chris Thompson, Susan Parks-Schlepp, Fiorella Zoll, Price Lang Consulting - "INK Day 2024"

PR Outstanding Feature Writing

Honorable Mention: Annelise Stephenson, Vallery Brown, Edna Espino, OU Health - "Miraculous Recovery: 4-Year-Old Overcomes Severe Brain Injury With Exceptional Care at Oklahoma's Only Level I Trauma Center"

Third place: Annelise Stephenson, Vallery Brown, Edna Espino, OU Health - "From Tiny Patient to Volunteer"

Second place: Annelise Stephenson, OU Health - "Finding Answers: Jeff's Journey to a Meningioma Diagnosis and Recovery"

First place: Adam Cohen, OMRF - "The Searcher"

PR Outstanding Press Release Writing

Honorable Mention: Annelise Stephenson, Vallery Brown, Edna Espino, OU Health - "Emergency Room Expansion at Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health Brings Specialized Areas, Increased Space"

Third place: Vallery Brown, Heide Brandes, Edna Espino, OU Health - "Fourth Cohort of Ukrainian Surgeons Visit Oklahoma to Train at OU Health"

Second place: Heide Brandes, Vallery Brown, Edna Espino, OU Health - "Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health Achieves Medical Milestone, Implanting Life-Saving Heart Devices in Pediatric Patients"

First place: Heide Brandes, Vallery Brown, Edna Espino, OU Health - "First Pediatric Heart Transplant Performed at Oklahoma Children's Hospital OU Health in Decades"

Total Awards: 160 across 67 categories

Media Distribution: Radio (46), Print (89), TV (9), PR (16)