

2023 IJEA Newspaper & Digital New Media Contest

Individual Winners | Division 3 | Enrollment 1,980 to 2,299

BEST ADVERTISEMENT

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
 - Entry Title: Congratulations to girls' cross country
 - Entry Credit: Abby Damasky
 - Judge Comment: Hell yeah, let's congratulate all those winning athletes. Like the copy.
-

BEST ALTERNATIVE STORYTELLING

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Upset countdown: top 5 underdog wins
- Entry Credit: PJ O'Grady
- Judge Comment: This is almost perfect. Almost. #2 should have been cut a little to avoid that awkward triangle of text. I would also like to see the first two words of this section on the same line, where "t h e" is now; it would fit and it would make everything clearer to the reader. #1 could do with some shaving off of word count too (easier said than done I know). Hyphenation and letter spacing gets weird on #5, you can always turn those features off or tone them down for certain paragraphs. There are some issues with the text too, like a missing period in ". ." Those are all minor edits on my part, you did a great job.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: The Stress That Stole Christmas
- Entry Credit: Karolina Glowa
- Judge Comment: I can tell your team uses surveys often, and I love that you even built a survey into this page. And the fact that you reported a fulfilling story from simple surveys (and additional interviews) shows you know exactly what readers (and ASF judges) are looking for. You do have a few formatting issues (I would replace -- with — from here on out and be consistent with spacing).

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School
- Entry Title: Children of war: a conversation with my grandmother
- Entry Credit: Tabitha Irvin

- Judge Comment: This is well done, however, is this line a paraphrase, or is it missing quote marks? "Scared is certainly a feeling I felt at 5. Trauma has a way of imprinting itself on people." There's a comma missing between Ukte and Germany too. Otherwise, this is strong, creative and alternative story format writing to a T!

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Humans of McHenry
- Entry Credit: Savannah Drost
- Judge Comment: I love the series and think it's a solid way to approach the Humans of New York method of storytelling. Your edit note does need to be revised though: display could be changed to displaying with a comma in front of it to fix.. As now it reads: "Humans of McHenry is a series of portraits and conversations that intends to showcase this diversity display what we have in common and unite us as Warriors and humans." There were a few problems with phrasing and tense in your bracket insertions to quotes too. Try to optimize these additions for readability. In the case of [The happiest moment was], replacing "the" with "my" would make a world of difference.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Groovy Movies: Summer recap
- Entry Credit: Kennedy Tetour
- Judge Comment: Looks like a new version of slides.js or some simpler, HTML5 equivalent. While the "back" button won't work, the UI has a substitute and I think 9/10 readers understand they need to click the next picture in the bar on top. Maybe you can add the arrows on both sides of the page that you see in slides.js to make it clearer. Your writing was short and punchy (a plus for Alternative Story Formats) and was error-free. Kudos to you for having your own subsite as well.

Competition Comment

These were great submissions and show a lot of promise. The deciding factor usually resolved with the degree to which a given submission stood on its own while also putting a premium on journalistic effort. This isn't the infographic category, Alternative Story Formats stand apart with greater emphasis on text and engagement. Magazines use ASFs religiously, especially in the front of the book section. Which in the older style magazines, can run really heavy on text, but still run the reader around a gambit of stories and make them feel wordly -- like they read 2x more than they actually did. The style has crept into newsletter and digital-first formats like Axios, and also defunct formats like Quartz' chatbot stories and Vox card stacks. These didn't fail because ASF is dying, rather ASF is becoming ubiquitous with the wider newsroom. Hone this craft and you'll go far

BEST AUDIO JOURNALISM

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: SAFE-T Laws
- Entry Credit: Kaylie Pasternak
- Judge Comment: A rarity among entries in this category: Actual journalism, with comments from people in a position to know stuff!

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Inkspill Episode 4 – ‘A Sense of Empowerment’: Mr. Patrick Lawler[podcast]
- Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush, Avani Rai
- Judge Comment: Solid interview.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Inkspill – ‘Uno Reverse Card: No Singular Story’ – Mr. Ricky King [Ep.5]
- Entry Credit: Avani Rai, Abby Ruebush
- Judge Comment: Very close call here, with two fine interviews from the same program.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: The mystery behind Dungeons & Dragons
- Entry Credit: Dean Carlson
- Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment

Students considering entering this category should be mindful of the need for entries to make news. And they should make that news clear at the onset of any audio. “Hey, hi and welcome to episode X of this series” is not a compelling open to a podcast. Find a way to get interesting words at the very open of any on-demand audio journalism.

BEST CENTERSPREAD STORY PACKAGE**First Place**

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: 100 Years of Disney Magic
- Entry Credit: Mollie Kearns, Claire Wynkoop, Alyssa Degan
- Judge Comment: None

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Girls’ cross makes bold ‘state’ment

- Entry Credit: Alyssa Degan, Ella Mitchell, Kevin Lynch, Emma Letzig, Katherine Lytle, Tito Gavin
- Judge Comment: None

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Beyond the Books: Teachers on their after school interests
- Entry Credit: Anna Dunne
- Judge Comment: None

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Mundelein High School
- Entry Title: Celebrating Diversity
- Entry Credit: Kayla Baltazar, Hadyn Nuttall, William Fisher
- Judge Comment: None

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
 - Entry Title: From State Championships to Friendships
 - Entry Credit: Dylan Wehmeyer
 - Judge Comment: None
-

BEST EDITORIAL CARTOON

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: SUMMERTIME STRUGGLES
- Entry Credit: Emily Depaz
- Judge Comment: This striking image would grab readers and pull them into the accompanying editorial. The image makes its own point with the desperate expression of the protagonist clutching at the "summer reading" as if trying to keep it within reach. The sharp point of the cartoon asks whether overwhelming teens with a summer chore is how to encourage reading.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Editorial Cartoon: Why replace the magic?
- Entry Credit: Rachel Kaminski
- Judge Comment: The image conveys a sense of ineffable longing for still another casualty of education via Zoom. Readers can choose between answering the question and idealizing the past.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Editorial Cartoon: The only two options
- Entry Credit: Claire Guzman
- Judge Comment: This cartoon compels readers to confront an uncomfortable truth about entering and leaving the school parking lot. The irony is in the title and the hint that more than two options exist -- and can steer drivers away from road rage.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Silenced
- Entry Credit: Bella Brouillette
- Judge Comment: The First Amendment merits a strong image in its defense, and the "censored" bar makes the point. This would grab readers and pull them into the accompanying editorial.

Competition Comment

Editorial cartoons at their best should challenge authority and address issues that relate to the school. Think of them as combining critical thinking with artistic talent. Making a strong point in the public interest is a good use of artistic talent. The tenets of the Hutchins Commission should guide the cartoonist in the same way they should guide editorial writers.

BEST FEATURE STORY

First Place

- Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School
- Entry Title: Kavanaugh: 'Intent was never to keep 18s'
- Entry Credit: Julia Hanson
- Judge Comment: This story could and should have been covered by Chicago-area media with as much coverage as the original stories received. Writer did a fantastic job pursuing quotes. Story was filled with many emotions and perspectives and the writer deftly captured them all. Excellent, truly excellent work.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: An honor
- Entry Credit: Nikki Sisson, Rayaan Ahmed, Cooper Ten Bruin
- Judge Comment: I like the angle the writer took, inserting herself into the story and making comparisons throughout. What a great story and how lucky the staffers were to have the opportunity to pursue it. Excellent work.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Fact or fiction?

- Entry Credit: Alayna Majkrzak
- Judge Comment: Writer did an excellent job covering a story that received a lot of local press. This story could stand up against any of the others and hold its own. Very complete coverage.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: Keep'n it (Be) Real
- Entry Credit: Michelle Kaner
- Judge Comment: A lighthearted look at a new app. What set this story apart was including teachers in the story and photos themselves. I had to give this clever story an award.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: A State of Crisis
- Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush
- Judge Comment: Story took a while to make the local connection, but once that was established the meaning was adequately conveyed.

Competition Comment

This was one of the toughest categories because so many of these stories were strong. I could have given out a couple more winners. Great work by these journalists!

BEST FRONT-PAGE DESIGN

First Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: February 2023
- Entry Credit: inkspot Staff
- Judge Comment: None

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Facing Forward
- Entry Credit: Ella Mitchell, Bella Brouillette, Emily Depaz, Luca Nicolaie
- Judge Comment: None

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Overturned, far from over
- Entry Credit: Kevin Lynch, Bella Brouillette
- Judge Comment: None

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Winter 2022
- Entry Credit: Inkspot Staff
- Judge Comment: None

Competition Comment

Decision comes down to the smallest of details and designers should be very proud with their creations.

BEST HEADLINE**First Place**

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Bike thefts shift to higher gear, school tries to steer
- Entry Credit: Justin Peabody
- Judge Comment: Good use of puns while still getting right to the point regarding what the story is about. It was clever and informative and made me want to read story.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: 'Sole' sisters run in stride
- Entry Credit: Emma Letzig
- Judge Comment: Good job using the sole pun to make it clear that the story is about a close relationship involving runners.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: 'Big shoes to fill': Ironmen basketball season preview
- Entry Credit: Ruth Oliveros-Gallardo, Giana Rawlings
- Judge Comment: Good headline. Good visuals. A minor issue I had was I thought the headline was an actual quote, because it is in quotation marks at top of page.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Clash of the Communities: QB combo can lead Iron over Dohn Community, into playoffs
- Entry Credit: Jeffery Woodard
- Judge Comment: Good job using a strong opening phrase, then a colon that leads into more info on the story.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Mundelein High School
- Entry Title: College stresses and the CCRC's successes
- Entry Credit: Lia McKenzie Koski
- Judge Comment: Pretty nice headline to let readers know that the center can help students with stress.

Competition Comment

Some good headlines here that helped me realize immediately what story would be about.

BEST HUMOROUS COMMENTARY

First Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Insomnia Cookies' Glampire Loaded Brownie review
- Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush, Dylan Wehmeyer
- Judge Comment: This is an amusing review of a special Halloween brownie confection laden with clever seasonal puns.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: Dear Leaders of Our School,
- Entry Credit: Nikhil Nair
- Judge Comment: This clever satire offers "advice" to school administrators in response to recently implemented policy. Good use of gentle humor to make a point.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
 - Entry Title: 'Pop astrology' pops off
 - Entry Credit: Ella Mitchell
 - Judge Comment: This writer reflects on her evolving views of astrology. Effective use of gentle self-deprecation.
-

BEST ILLUSTRATION

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Facing Forward
- Entry Credit: Bella Brouillette, Emily Depaz, Luca Nicolaie
- Judge Comment: Captivating photo illustration that serves as a jarring entry-point to this article. The patchwork of faces and colors emphasizes the "unity" theme. Very nice.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: The Ultimate Romance Movie Marathon [Display Headline Graphic]
- Entry Credit: Marielsie Iglesias, Dylan Wehmeyer
- Judge Comment: Nice use of headline/photos combination. I especially like the choice of type for the headline -- it invokes old-time movie posters (and the choice of black and white adds to that). Good work.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: A Devastating Talent (Taylor Swift Illustration)
- Entry Credit: Marielsie Iglesias
- Judge Comment: Very nice use of Taylor Swift drawing? photo illustration? to accompany this article. The photo grouping at top leads well into the story, and the dominant illustration at bottom seems to wrap around it.

Competition Comment

IJEA's guidelines clearly state that the artwork should be the dominant illustration accompanying a story -- but without the story or the page, we have no way to judge that. Entrants should make sure we have what we need to judge your work in comparison with others' work that DOES include the article/page.

BEST IN-DEPTH NEW STORY

First Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Cut it out
- Entry Credit: Grace Hunt
- Judge Comment: Excellent report that addresses a major issue at the school. Great sources and attribution. The issue of class cutting is well documented and supported. Nice job.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Overturned, far from over
- Entry Credit: Kevin Lynch
- Judge Comment: Great job reporting on a sensitive, but timely issue. Good inclusion of variety of sources. Try avoiding comments to other media as you did with Planned Parenthood comments to ABC7.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: At the center of 'the drug triangle'
- Entry Credit: Vanessa Moreno

- Judge Comment: Great reporting about a difficult issue. Nice mix of sources, especially the state's attorney. Stronger specifics would help rather than say "many" or "other" -- identify and support information.

Competition Comment

The winning entries were examples of excellent reporting. Topics were timely and impacted the school community. In-depth pieces need a variety of sources, details and attribution of information. In-depth stories need to be more than just a long news story.

BEST INFOGRAPHIC

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Meet the historic team
- Entry Credit: Ella Mitchell
- Judge Comment: Beautiful layout. Love the energy and movement of the design. The information is solid and creatively presented.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Transforming into the B1G 16
- Entry Credit: Zach Moreth
- Judge Comment: Timeline is a great idea to enhance the article. Well done - easy to follow and the logos are a helpful and colorful addition. The first 7 above 1896 are hard to see.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
 - Entry Title: 'The Hunger Games' Turns 10: Top 10 Revolutionary Moments
 - Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush
 - Judge Comment: Timeline is a nice addition to the article, attractive and inviting. Well done, but a bit crowded - perhaps remove the sentence that starts, "Since 2008, the Hunger Games..."?
-

BEST MULTIMEDIA STORY PACKAGE

First Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: An honor
- Entry Credit: Nikki Sisson, Rayaan Ahmed, Cooper Ten Bruin
- Judge Comment: Well done. I was impressed by the layout, presentation, writing, photos, inboxes and depth this story had. Great job!

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: New Faces of Normal
- Entry Credit: Inkspot Staff
- Judge Comment: Q&As can easily feel static, but the presentation of this one helped bring it to life. Very creative!

Third Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: MCHS celebrates Homecoming 2022
- Entry Credit: Ary Juarez, Kennedy Tetour
- Judge Comment: The photo galleries and descriptions did a great job of telling the story.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Madrigals provide sneak-peek of next weekend's shows; limited tickets remain [video]
- Entry Credit: Inkspot Staff
- Judge Comment: The text was short, but I enjoyed how the author chose to let the performance speak volumes. Great use of video.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Mundelein High School
 - Entry Title: A Look Into the Final Week of Rehearsals for Mundelein's First Fully-Staged Musical since 2019.
 - Entry Credit: Hadyn Nuttall
 - Judge Comment: Great photos and description.
-

BEST NEWS OR FEATURE PHOTO**First Place**

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: An honor
- Entry Credit: Nikki Sisson
- Judge Comment: A striking image! The color against the black and white is really nice.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Teen girls 'engulfed in growing wave of sadness,' new national data finds
- Entry Credit: Mackenzie Sroka
- Judge Comment: Lovely, quiet photo. Really like the lighting.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Overturned, far from over
- Entry Credit: Bella Brouillette
- Judge Comment: Powerful image. Well-done!

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Mundelein High School
- Entry Title: Starting a new verse: the rise of new show choir group, Reverb
- Entry Credit (**revised 05-17-23**): Kayla Baltazar
- Judge Comment: Nice point of view and composition.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Mundelein High School
 - Entry Title: MHS Jazz Ensemble showcases talent at performances
 - Entry Credit: Megan Burns
 - Judge Comment: Good job capturing the performance.
-

BEST NEWS STORY**First Place**

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Board of Education approves cuts in face of \$12 million deficit
- Entry Credit: Inkspot Staff
- Judge Comment: Top notch writing and reporting! The piece is clear, direct and very newsworthy. Well done.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: MCC to charge for dual credit classes next year
- Entry Credit: Tati Rubi
- Judge Comment: Great work here. You make important information interesting and you made sure the reader knew the implications of the news.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Bike thefts shift into higher gear, school tries to steer
- Entry Credit: Justin Peabody
- Judge Comment: A very interesting read! Next time move your nut graph higher and make it more concise. It's okay if it comes in the middle of your opening anecdote, if you do it right.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
 - Entry Title: The Long Road to Safety
 - Entry Credit: Carlos Hernandez
 - Judge Comment: You did a great job localizing the news for your reader. The quotes are good but very long. Try to incorporate them more smoothly into the text of the article, next time.
-

BEST OVERALL DESIGN

First Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: February 2023
- Entry Credit: Inkspot Staff
- Judge Comment: Distinct color choices, headlines and backgrounds give each story a self-contained, packaged feel. Best examples: Line by Line, Storybook Romance, The Battle for F.I.R.S.T. Heart of Yoga spread features nice use of text frames, callouts and bleeds. Body copy is clean with few widows, orphans or bad text breaks.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Prospector Issue #3
- Entry Credit: Ella Mitchell, Kevin Lynch, Kaylie Pasternak, PJ O'Grady, Zach Moreth, Amanda Feinberg
- Judge Comment: Eye-catching use of illustration on P.1. Screens, callouts and infographics on pp. 2, 8-9, 12-13 and 16 help create visual interest. Clearly marked folios and section heads. Good use of illustrations on pp. 12-13.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Mundelein High School
- Entry Title: Vol 63 Issue 4 - February issue
- Entry Credit: Hadyn Nuttall, Kayla Baltazar, Megan Burns, William Fisher
- Judge Comment: Clearly marked folios and section heads. Body copy is generally clean with few widows, orphans or bad text breaks. Good use of screens on pp. 5, 6 and 9.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: How to advance in the game of life (full black-and-white edition)
- Entry Credit: Caitlyn Claussen, Sabrina Bukvarevic, Carlos Hernandez-Hernandez, Mohnish Soni, Thomas Noonan, Andrei Badulescu, Timea Matavova, Salma Hassab, Aleksandra Majewski, Michelle Kaner, Teagan O'Connor, Karolina Glowa, Zonna Todorovska, Gabriela x Szewczyk, Daniel Solomon, Caiden Claussen, Weronika Kmiec, Emma Penumaka, Ysabela Ang, Maria Murillo

- Judge Comment: Inventive and eye-catching use of graphics capture story themes on each page. Best examples: Playing Your Cards Right, Piecing Together the College Puzzle. White space achieved on all pages.
-

BEST PERSONALITY PROFILE

First Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Strictly business: Cruse raises the bar
- Entry Credit: Eli Benson
- Judge Comment: This is excellent, with a stunning opening and a slow stringing along of explosive facts. The quotes are terrific; the reporter has a real ear and knew how to ask the questions that would lead to the best quotes.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Gadson places third, shares story
- Entry Credit: Amanda Feinberg
- Judge Comment: This story could use a better headline but otherwise is very strong. It handles a tricky subject with understanding, detail, and openness, in this way doing justice to the story's subject.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Line by Line - A portrait of Isha Gollapudi
- Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush
- Judge Comment: Very strong work. I would suggest a few edits, such as cutting paragraph 2, which repeats para 1 in meaning. But these are small changes to a great profile.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Robinson pushes limits with rap
- Entry Credit: PJ O'Grady
- Judge Comment: Nicely done. This could use more scenes and storytelling. But the profile does a beautiful job of connecting Denzel's artistic hopes to larger hopes for racial justice.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Changing plans
- Entry Credit: Vanessa Moreno

- Judge Comment: This is an excellent story that is extremely helpful to students. Teachers who talk about their personal failures inspire students to make use of moments of failure. The storytelling and lead are strong, as are the quotes. I would love a bit of in-person reporting on her teaching style, but that is polishing what is already gold.

Competition Comment

Thank you. The high quality of these entries made judging a joy.

BEST PHOTO GALLERY/SLIDESHOW

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: No tricks! Just treats at Prospect's Haunted High School
- Entry Credit: Alyssa Degan
- Judge Comment: Love the variety of angles in these photos! The compositional choices are very strong. Great visual storytelling!

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Photo album: Prospect Dance Show 2022
- Entry Credit: Emma Letzig
- Judge Comment: This gallery told the story of the dance show through the movement and expressions of the participants. Nice job of pulling everything together into a seamless combination of words and images!

Third Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Real Warriors: Winter spirit week
- Entry Credit: Preston Boysen
- Judge Comment: The fisheye concept could have become monotonous, but I really like the way the photographer committed himself to it. Nice way to get a fresh perspective on an annual event!

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Mundelein High School
- Entry Title: A Look Into the Final Week of Rehearsals for Mundelein's First Fully-Staged Musical since 2019.
- Entry Credit: Hadyn Nuttall
- Judge Comment: Loved the photos — very nice variety of shots. This would have placed higher with more photos and an actual gallery setup — that is, enlargeable and navigable photos in a slideshow format. But still, this is solid work!

Competition Comment

All of the competitors in Division 3 understood how to do visual storytelling. It was a delight to judge this division!

BEST PHOTO STORY

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Enchanted Knightimes
- Entry Credit: Bella Brouillette
- Judge Comment: Excellent mix of a variety of images. Well done!

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Mundelein High School
- Entry Title: Show choir in the spotlight
- Entry Credit: Hadyn Nuttall
- Judge Comment: Good group of photos. Captures the production nicely.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Mundelein High School
 - Entry Title: A miraculous production: MHS puts on The Miracle Worker
 - Entry Credit: Kayla Baltazar
 - Judge Comment: Also a good group of images showcasing the production.
-

BEST REVIEW

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: 'TÁR' review: A masterpiece
- Entry Credit: Kevin Lynch
- Judge Comment: A splendid analysis of Todd Field's masterpiece with an endearingly personalized introduction.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Crumbl Cookies' Peppermint Cupcake cookie review
- Entry Credit: Abby Ruebush, Avani Rai
- Judge Comment: I laughed out loud at the exuberant wit of these dueling takes on the titular dessert.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Sounds Off: Top 10 movie soundtrack songs

- Entry Credit: Kelsey Kern, Hannah Kocar
- Judge Comment: The writer vividly describes how each of these songs made the visuals that they accompanied all the more unforgettable.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: Fixing What's Broken
- Entry Credit: Jris Delacruz
- Judge Comment: Excellent, spot-on commentary on the racist backlash received by the upcoming "Little Mermaid" remake.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Review: Fighting high expectations
- Entry Credit: Gabe Santos
- Judge Comment: A very well-written mixed review that does a fine job of detailing the album's strengths and weaknesses.

Competition Comment

A very strong group of submissions, including the podcast review of "Don't Worry Darling," which entertainingly dissected both the film itself and the media storm that accompanied it.

BEST SERIOUS COMMENTARY

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Anxiety manifests, manageable
- Entry Credit: Amanda Feinberg
- Judge Comment: Relevant and informative and well organized editorial; well researched with relevant quotes from reliable sources.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: U.S. in Turmoil: Theocracy or Democracy?
- Entry Credit: Salma Hassab
- Judge Comment: This editorial uses relevant examples and makes valid points about recent Supreme Court decisions.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Why the Midterms matter; Turning point in politics
- Entry Credit: Avani Rai

- Judge Comment: very informative, well-researched editorial. Logical and consistent point of view.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: Farewell Tweetie
- Entry Credit: Timea Matavova
- Judge Comment: well researched editorial in a group of well written and researched editorials. Relevant not only to students, but to society as a whole.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School
 - Entry Title: Security additions shed light on societal gun violence
 - Entry Credit: Tabitha Irvin
 - Judge Comment: well written and researched, descriptions bring reader involvement. However, the solutions you proposed have already been tried.
-

BEST SINGLE-PAGE STORY PACKAGE

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Allegiance or nuisance
- Entry Credit: Kevin Lynch
- Judge Comment: Excellent writing and reporting, both in news story and opinion piece. Good main head and opinion head, infographics support key themes of story. Good use of color.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: Back From the Dead
- Entry Credit: Karolina Glowa, Zonna Todorovska, Emilia Ezlakowski
- Judge Comment: Creative, easily comprehended headshot/quote package. Well-written and -reported advance. Action photos are too small to read. Omitting them wouldn't have been a bad thing.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: 'Pop astrology' pops off
- Entry Credit: Ella Mitchell
- Judge Comment: Great writing, evidence of careful editing. Muted color helps wraps around 75 and 76% graphics. Good use of color. Would have helped comprehension of lead visual to increase its size, work with color a bit and eliminate the circle graphic at

bottom, which doesn't add any useful information — just repeats what most people know.

BEST SPORTS COMMENTARY

First Place

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: Committing the crime, but not doing the time
- Entry Credit: Daniel Solomon, Salma Hassab
- Judge Comment: A fine opinion piece laying out the moral conflicts fans and teams have when players misbehave and get away with it.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Baseball: a sport of strikeouts, sadness
- Entry Credit: PJ O'Grady
- Judge Comment: A fun opinion piece giving the reader a peek into the mind and stresses of baseball players.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Blackhawks trade deadline review: Everything the Hawks did to make them the worst team possible
- Entry Credit: Matthew Niemczyk
- Judge Comment: A solid piece assessing the trades and draft pieces acquired by the Blackhawks.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School
- Entry Title: Pre-game traditions promote sexism
- Entry Credit: Maggie Fleming
- Judge Comment: A nice opinion piece pointing out an inequity.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
 - Entry Title: Opinion: Brock Purdy should be permanent first-string quarterback
 - Entry Credit: Hunter Blake
 - Judge Comment: A good opinion piece making logical arguments and backing them up with facts.
-

BEST SPORTS FEATURE STORY

First Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Game Changer: Coach Witzig, after 28 years, scores a bid to the IBCA Hall of Fame
- Entry Credit: Dylan Wehmeyer
- Judge Comment: Great entry into this story. Provides perspective and sets the tone. Sections are key to the story organization and as a guide to lead the reader. More than a tribute. A lovely look at his impact and journey.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Balancing both
- Entry Credit: Mackenzie Sroka
- Judge Comment: Good topic and use of interviews. Stick to SAID for your attribution. The lead drew the reader in. Perhaps come back to that description at the end of the story. In a feature you can do that.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: Warriors moving on up
- Entry Credit: Caitlyn Claussen
- Judge Comment: Genuinely interesting piece with background and explanation. Well written and organized.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Regionals loss ends Ironmen soccer seniors' sentimental season
- Entry Credit: Anna Dunne
- Judge Comment: So many stories to tell. What a variety. Good job breaking them up and giving each the attention it deserved. Good interviews.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Hamlin scare spreads new attention, unity
- Entry Credit: Zach Moreth
- Judge Comment: Nice way to localize a national story. Good interviews and use of quotes and background. And the psychological aspect was important, too.

Competition Comment

Great topics in this division. Some of the stories were really interesting and good feature topics, they just needed more perspective or insight. Overall a stand-out group of sports features.

BEST SPORTS NEWS STORY

First Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Boys' basketball makes dramatic run
- Entry Credit: PJ O'Grady, Zach Moreth
- Judge Comment: Fantastic job contrasting the rough start of the season to the strong finish. Great imagery showing how the coach would play motivational videos to help with overcoming adversity and building confidence – a central theme of the piece. Great job making in-game moments feel big. "With the season on the line, Schneider hit undoubtedly the biggest shot of the year and maybe one of the biggest in the history of the program."

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Girls basketball starts season with a win, hopes of building on last year's success [season preview]
- Entry Credit: Inkspot Staff
- Judge Comment: Great use of statistics and analysis to create a smooth flowing piece. Loved how the coach highlighted complacency as a possible area of concern due to having most of the team back.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: 'Big shoes to fill': Ironmen basketball season preview
- Entry Credit: Ruth Oliveros-Gallardo, Giana Rawlings
- Judge Comment: Great use of historical context, quotes from the coach on why graduates on this team were so impactful and the challenges new players face having to fill those shoes. It flows like a professional sports piece.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Mundelein High School
- Entry Title: A sneak peek into girls basketball, off to a strong start
- Entry Credit: Megan Burns
- Judge Comment: I'd put the section about the free throw fundraiser toward the end so that the piece is split into two clear sections – one about the fundraiser and one about the tournament. Nice use of team quotes to highlight how the players learned from their losses and great callback to the 110% effort line at the end.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Championship or bust
- Entry Credit: Mackenzie Sroka

- Judge Comment: Cutting a few paragraphs would help it flow better. Great job of explaining the process of getting to state and the team's growth and development to get there over the course of the season."

Competition Comment

Some really great season previews and summaries. I was impressed by all of the use of program historical context to shine a light on a team accomplished in a season or what their expectations were going into a new season.

BEST SPORTS PHOTO

First Place

- Contestant Name: Maine West High School
- Entry Title: Kicking-off Homecoming
- Entry Credit: Gabby Szewczyk
- Judge Comment: Wow! What a great shot. Puts us right in the middle of the action!!

Second Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Gallery: First football game of the season
- Entry Credit: Mackenzie Sroka
- Judge Comment: Another great shot bringing us into the work of the team. Well-done!

Third Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Moore takes first at state wrestling tournament
- Entry Credit: Krystal Zamudio
- Judge Comment: Good, tight shot of the match. Shows the intensity and determination of the wrestlers.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Girls' cross makes bold 'state'ment
- Entry Credit: Alyssa Degan
- Judge Comment: A great moment captured! Really nice composition showing the crossing of all the arms and the camaraderie of the runners.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
 - Entry Title: BOOM
 - Entry Credit: Bella Brouillette
 - Judge Comment: Good work capturing the drive and interaction of the players.
-

BEST STAFF EDITORIAL

First Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: Staff Opinion: Inkspot endorses Unit 5 referendum
- Entry Credit: Inkspot Staff
- Judge Comment: Fabulous job with this! Very important to focus on community based issues and then relate them back to students and your school.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Downers Grove North High School
- Entry Title: Doctors' notes: expensive slips of paper
- Entry Credit: Sarah Woods
- Judge Comment: Great job with a topic that some may not realize can be inequitable!
- Place Name: Third Place
- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Extend sex ed school-wide
- Entry Credit: The Prospector Editorial Board
- Judge Comment: Good job with a school specific issue you're hearing about. In the future, be sure to sprinkle more of your opinion throughout the piece instead of at the beginning. This will make it read more like an editorial than a feature.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Extend sex ed school-wide
- Entry Credit: The Prospector Editorial Board
- Judge Comment: Good job with a school specific issue you're hearing about. In the future, be sure to sprinkle more of your opinion throughout the piece instead of at the beginning. This will make it read more like an editorial than a feature.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: ChatGPT 'AI'ds education
- Entry Credit: The Prospector Editorial Board
- Judge Comment: Very topical and interesting! Be sure to have your opinion throughout the article so it can read more like an editorial than a feature.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Editorial: Be kind this summer
- Entry Credit: Editorial Board
- Judge Comment: Good job with this! Be sure to use some school specific examples in the future if possible.

Competition Comment

Great category! Very impressed with the range of ideas here

BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**First Place**

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: KnightMedia Twitter
- Entry Credit: Abby Damasky, Luis Hernandez
- Judge Comment: None

Second Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: McHenry Messenger Instagram
- Entry Credit: Nikki Sisson
- Judge Comment: None

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: NCH Inkspot Twitter
- Entry Credit: Inkspot Staff
- Judge Comment: None

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
 - Entry Title: McHenry Messenger Twitter
 - Entry Credit: Marcos Lagunas
 - Judge Comment: None
-

BEST VIDEO STORY**First Place**

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: A child's wish
- Entry Credit: Rayaan Ahmed, Apryl Hanneman, Kyra Henry
- Judge Comment: good opening video; good vo. good framing of shots; good interviews, good variety of interviews, good cutaways; would like to have heard from the child very good report.

Second Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School

- Entry Title: Race to the record books: Ali Ince's run at history
- Entry Credit: Anna Dunne, Avani Rai, Drew Farmer
- Judge Comment: good opening video and vo--compelling video throughout; relevant cutaway footage; good record board shot and trophy shot; needed to frame the coaches up better--solid story--needed to edit tighter-- a little too long. good job.

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Family ties strike up success
- Entry Credit: Emma Letzig
- Judge Comment: good video and vo; relevant video and cutaways throughout pack; good interviews, needed mic on coach, a little too long--needed to tighten up on the editing.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
- Entry Title: Multicultural fair celebrates diversity, encourages inclusivity
- Entry Credit: Juliet Aquino
- Judge Comment: good opening video and vo good script need mic for interviews; watch using soft focus shots, good script; nice story to be told good job.

Honorable Mention

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: Not-so-home-court advantage
- Entry Credit: Cooper Ten Bruin, TJ Haws
- Judge Comment: good video, nice cutaways, needed to set up soundbites, needed to isolate subjects better-use mic; good closing standup.

Competition Comment

General comments. Good stories relevant to students. Entries were fun to view. Keep up the good work. Watch professionals and critique evening news to help hone your craft.

BEST WEBSITE

First Place

- Contestant Name: Normal Community High School
- Entry Title: NCHSinkspot.com
- Entry Credit: Inkspot Staff
- Judge Comment: You have such a diversity of content!! The podcast is super well-produced and I love all of the plays-on-words like connecting "inkspill" with "spilling the tea." I love the embedded images in articles (like the Hunger Games one); I think stuff like that really helps to pull people in and snag their interest. The photos are all super high quality and thoughtfully taken; the one of the guy's arm on fire in the

chemistry photo gallery is so cool! I just have one suggestion to make, which would be to add some information to the "live" tab (like a schedule or past videos) or change the YouTube embed so it shows something different when you're not live. When I went on that page, it just gave me a box that said "video is unavailable." Other than that, excellent work!

Second Place

- Contestant Name: McHenry High School
- Entry Title: The McHenry Messenger
- Entry Credit: Kennedy Tetour
- Judge Comment: Well, first off, that logo is incredible!! I audibly said "wow" when I saw it. All the content on the sidebar is well-used/organized; it shows the range of content you have on-site without being overwhelming. I loved the new episode of Warrior Weekly (April 4), and I love how you have a whole cartoon category. All of the photos on-site are super high quality, and the author headshot and bios are super cool! And I really like the playlists tab! I've never seen that before on a news site, but I know I would use that regularly if I were a student; I'm always looking for another good themed playlist. If I could make one suggestion, it would be to reorganize the setup of the Warrior Weekly videos. I watched the new one in the sidebar but then couldn't find any episodes on-site after November 2022. Other than that, great work!!

Third Place

- Contestant Name: Prospect High School
 - Entry Title: ProspectorNow.com
 - Entry Credit: Emma Letzig, Dean Carlson
 - Judge Comment: Your podcasts and videos are super well-produced; I enjoyed watching the episode on the woman who does Henna. The header images on articles are high quality and do a good job of drawing readers in. And I really like the author bios and headshots! If I could make a few suggestions, one would be to adjust the photo settings or spacing to get rid of the big white spaces between articles on pages like news and features. Also, it looks like a few of the author/contributor bios are getting cut off at the bottom of articles as they reach the character limit (I assume), so that may be able to be adjusted on the backend of the site. Other than that, great work!
-