

2022 Competition Rules and Entry Information

1. Publication period for the contest is May 1, 2021, to April 30, 2022. Entries submitted must be from newspapers or websites published during this period. **The deadline to submit entries is 11:59 p.m. Friday, Aug. 5.**
2. Questions regarding membership status and dues should be addressed to Shelley Hendricks at 815-753-4239 or via email to shendricks@niu.edu.
3. Content of all entries must be original work. See sheet labeled "Contest Category and Entry Information" for specific information about entering submissions for each category.
4. Most entries must be submitted as PDFs, JPGs or URLs at <http://www.newspapercontest.com/NINA>.
5. The entry fee for NINA members is \$6 per entry. The non-member entry fee is \$9 per entry. New this year, there is no limit to the number of entries per nameplate for most categories (see individual category rules). This change primarily was made to facilitate freelancer participation. Please continue to enter only highest-caliber work so as not to overburden judges.
6. The general excellence award continues to replace the sweepstakes award (see General Excellence section below for more information). Each category description explains these and other limits.
7. Judges will be selected by NIU on the basis of academic and/or professional expertise. Judges typically are NIU journalism faculty, other journalism educators in the region and/or professional journalists not associated with the contest. However, accomplished professionals and/or scholars with relevant subject matter expertise who are not journalists or journalism educators may also serve as judges. Judges will be provided contest rules and relevant category entry information.
8. First-place winners in each category will be awarded a framed certificate. Second- and third-place winners will be awarded certificates. Judges will award a first, second and third place in each category and an honorable mention if warranted unless the number of entries precludes it, in which case there will always be a first-place winner.
9. If judges think an entry has been wrongly categorized, or is inappropriate for the category, they should notify the contest coordinator. The contest coordinator has the power to reclassify entries after consulting with NINA executive officers. He/she also may combine daily/nondaily entries into one group if warranted by fewer than three entries in an individual circulation category.

CLASSIFICATION OF PUBLICATIONS

Contests are divided into two classifications of NINA publications. The **Nondailies** group includes all newspapers published fewer than four times a week and includes online-only publications. The **Dailies** group includes all newspapers published more than four times a week and includes all newspapers printed as inserts in those dailies. Sunday editions are eligible for entry.

If any daily publication makes a significant contribution to a weekly paper's content, that work should be entered in the Daily contest category. Entrants may enter in only one classification.

GENERAL EXCELLENCE (FORMERLY SWEEPSTAKES AWARDS)

The James S. Copley and the Donald R. Grubb traveling awards will be presented in the Daily and Non-Daily categories for overall General Excellence rather than accumulation of points from other contest categories. Each paper will submit PDFs of 3 complete editions. Each nameplate or flag will be judged individually. **For this contest year, papers should submit one date of submitter's choosing and the issues from May 24, 2021, and from Jan. 14, 2022.** Papers who did not publish on these dates should submit the issues closest to those dates.

- Judges will use a 100-point system to review each entry. Points will be assigned as follows:
- 1-20 points – Quality of local news and feature content
- 1-20 points – Enterprise, In-depth/watchdog reporting
- 1-20 points – Editorial page leadership/reader engagement
- 1-15 points – Quality of Sports content
- 1-15 points – Use of Photos/multimedia content
- 1-10 points – Design: Page layout; Headlines; Use of art, graphics, infoboxes, effective flags to related online content.

Questions: Please contact Shelley Hendricks, NINA's communications coordinator, at 815-753-4239; shendricks@niu.edu.

CONTEST AND AWARDS SPONSORSHIP

The Journalism Program of the NIU Department of Communication conducts this contest (in cooperation with the Northern Illinois Newspaper Association) and sponsors awards for this contest. The department reserves exclusive rights in determining, in accordance with contest rules, the eligibility of entries, judging of entries, and awarding recognition. A judging fee of \$6 for every individual or newspaper entry in every category must be enclosed along with entry.

CONTEST CATEGORY AND ENTRY INFORMATION

1. **BEST DESIGN** Awarded to newspaper showing excellence in design, including typography, photo/graphics use, and general appearance. Front page will be considered the most important factor, but other news, sports, feature and opinion pages and display of advertising also will be considered. Entries should consist of three issues published during the contest year. Entry should consist of one PDF per issue (three PDFs total); each PDF will have multiple pages. Do not upload each page as its own PDF. Entry: Submit three complete issues. One entry per publication.
2. **BEST INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC** Judged on originality, clarity and ability to illustrate the concept or story. Graphs, maps, charts and original illustrations are eligible. Black-and-white or color. Note: Illustrative photos should be entered in a photo category. Entry: Clearly identify which graphic is being submitted in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box. Packages for which more than one element is used may be entered as a single graphic.
3. **BEST HEADLINE WRITING** Judged on imagination, originality and relevance of the headlines to the stories. Display headlines also may be entered and will be judged additionally on how well they contribute to the story-package design. Entry: Submit three headlines by the same writer. Please write the headlines in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
4. **BEST SPECIAL SECTION:** For a one-time section marking a specific event, observance or topic. Judged on quality of writing, editing, design, photography/graphics and local focus. Entry: Please submit one PDF file containing all pages of the section. One entry per publication.
5. **BEST GENERAL FEATURE** For a single feature article, as contrasted with a spot/breaking news story, not covered in the Personality Profile category. Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Entry: Submit page PDFs clearly marked. Please write the headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
6. **BEST PERSONALITY PROFILE** For best single feature article, as contrasted with a spot/breaking news story, profiling a person. Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Entry: Submit page PDFs. Please write the headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
7. **OWEN PHELPS AWARD / BEST RELIGION STORY** For a single story that illuminates issues of faith and/or spirituality in everyday life. Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Sidebars published the same day may be included as part of entry. Entry: Submit PDFs. Please write headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
8. **BEST BUSINESS/FINANCIAL/CONSUMER STORY** May be either news or feature story. Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Entry: Submit PDF(s). Please write headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
9. **BEST TECHNOLOGY/MEDICAL STORY** For a locally developed story reporting, explaining or interpreting a technological subject, including medical or health subjects. Story may be either feature or news but should focus on technological advances as related to people in your community. Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Entry: Submit PDFs. Please write headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
10. **BEST SPORTS STORY** Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Single story. Sidebars published the same day may be included as part of entry. No columns. Entry: Submit page PDFs. Please write the headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.

11. **BEST SPORTS COLUMNIST** For the best three locally developed bylined sports columns by a single writer. Judged on originality, voice, quality of writing and local focus. Entry: Submit three columns by the same writer. Please write headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box. Limit one entry by an individual writer.
12. **BEST COLUMNIST** For the best three locally developed bylined columns (as contrasted to unsigned editorials). Non-sports. Judged on originality, voice, quality of writing and local focus. Entry: Submit three columns by the same writer. Please write the headlines in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box. Limit one entry by an individual writer.
13. **BEST EDITORIAL** For best single editorial on a local issue. Judged on quality of writing and strength of argument and suggested solution. Entry: Submit page PDFs. Please write the headline in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box, along with name and staff position of the individual(s) who composed the editorial. No more than two entries by each writer with limit of four entries per publication.
14. **BEST SPOT NEWS PHOTO** Judged on urgency/news value of the image, composition, technical quality and cutline information gathered. Entry: Submit PDF. In the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box, please write brief description of photo.
15. **BEST FEATURE PHOTO** Judged on composition, technical quality, emotional appeal, news value and cutline assistance. Entry: Submit PDFs. In the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box, please write brief description of photo.
16. **BEST SPORTS PHOTO** Judged on news value, composition, technical quality, emotional appeal and cutline assistance. Entry: Submit PDF. In the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box, please write brief description of photo.
17. **BEST ONLINE PHOTO GALLERY** Entry should consist of a series of related photos from a single event, presented online with or without related audio. Judged on news value, emotional appeal, composition and technical quality of individual photos, plus cohesiveness of the entire gallery. Cutlines will be considered in judging. Entry: Include URL of the gallery in “URL” field of the online entry box.
18. **BEST VIDEO** For video reporting presented online. News or feature story. Judged on news value, quality of editing/production and selection of a story that uses the medium well. Note: Audio slideshows should be entered in the Online Photo Gallery category rather than this one. Entry: Include URL of the video in “URL” field of the online entry box.
19. **BEST WEBSITE** A general-excellence award. Judged on overall content and design, local emphasis, interactivity, ease of navigation and extra features not found in the print edition. Entry: Include URL of the website in “URL” field of the online entry box. One entry per publication.
20. **BEST SPOT NEWS STORY** Judged on news value/urgency, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Single story. May include related sidebars from the same issue. Entry: Submit PDFs clearly marked indicating the entry. Entries that represent a team effort should list team members and designate lead writer or editor. Please write headline(s) in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
21. **BEST IN-DEPTH NEWS STORY:** Judged on news value, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Entire story must have been published in one issue. Multiple related stories published the

same day will be considered one entry. Stories that reveal wrongdoing in government, nonprofit organizations or private business should be entered in the Best Watchdog Reporting category and may not be duplicated in this category. Entry: Submit PDFs. Entries that represent a team effort should list team members and designate lead writer or editor. Please write headline(s) on the entry form.

22. **BEST IN-DEPTH NEWS STORY SERIES:** For excellence in a planned, scheduled series of stories about any one topic. Judged on news value, evidence of investigative work, story and series organization, quality of reporting, writing and local focus, visual presentation, headline writing, graphics, photography and multimedia presentation. Stories that reveal wrongdoing in government, nonprofit organizations or private business should be entered in the Best Watchdog Reporting category and may not be duplicated in this category. Entry: Submit PDFs clearly marked indicating the entry. Entries that represent a team effort should list team members and designate lead writer or editor. Please write headlines in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
23. **BEST EDUCATION REPORTING** For excellence in education reporting as demonstrated by a single writer’s best three stories from the contest year. Judged on news value, variety, quality of reporting and writing and local focus. Supplemental online material also may be entered. Do not enter a series; use category 22 for that. Entry: Three separate stories by one writer. Submit PDFs and/or urls and clearly indicate the entries in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
24. **BEST WATCHDOG REPORTING** For excellence in performing the watchdog function in a single story or in an unscheduled series of stories that reveals wrongdoing in government, nonprofit organizations, private business, education, law enforcement, military or other institutions. Judges should consider reporting enterprise, barriers to obtaining the information, accuracy, clarity of analysis and writing style. Judges may consider civic impact and evaluate the circumstances prompting the coverage and results achieved. Entries in this category may NOT also be entered in either the Best In-Depth News Story or Best In-Depth News Story Series categories. Entry: Submit PDFs. Entries that represent a team effort should list team members and designate lead writer or editor. Please write headline(s) on the entry form.
25. **BEST USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY AN INDIVIDUAL** This award recognizes the most effective use of social media by an individual. Judging will be based on the quality and originality of content on social media platforms, innovation in the use of social media, evidence of audience engagement, integration with other electronic and print content and overall impact. Judges will pick a random day/time to view the entry. Entry: Please submit a link.
26. **BEST COVERAGE OF SOCIAL ISSUES** This award will recognize excellence for a social issues story or series. Social issues are matters that can be explained only by factors outside an individual’s control and immediate social environment which affect many individuals in a society. Common social issues include poverty, violence, justice, human rights (suppression of), equality (or discrimination), and crime and usually revolve around conflicting viewpoints and tensions between people who take different stances. Columns should not be entered in this category. Judges will consider readability, originality and impact. Entry: Submit PDFs clearly marked

indicating the entry. Please write headlines in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.

27. **BEST USE OF HUMOR** For excellence in using humor to delight and inform audiences. Entries could be single stories, humor columns, cartoons, illustrations, photo stories or videos. Entry: Submit PDFs clearly marked indicating the entry. Please write headlines in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
28. **BEST GOVERNMENT/PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORTING** This award will recognize exemplary reporting on state, local or federal government and how it affects a newspaper’s community. Judges will consider the clarity and relevance to readers. Stories might be on coverage of city hall, school boards, state legislation, etc. Editorials supporting the reporting examples may be part of the entry, but not the focus of the entry. Entry: Submit pdfs or URLs of articles within the contest period. Each individual may submit two separate entries with limit of four entries per publication. Entries may include a series of multiple stories or ongoing coverage of a single issue. Please write headlines in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
29. **BEST HISTORICAL FEATURE** This award will recognize an excellent single story or series of up to three stories that brings local history to life. Entry: Submit PDFs clearly marked indicating the entry. Please write headlines in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
30. **BEST LOCALIZED NEWS STORY** Entries should be stories in which local facts have been added to a state, national or international story. Judges will consider the clarity and relevance to readers as well as readability, originality and impact on the local community. Entry: Submit PDFs clearly marked indicating the entry. Please write headlines in the “explanation or cutline” field of the online entry box.
31. **MOST IMPACTFUL COVERAGE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** For excellence in a single story or an unscheduled series of stories that follows a public service theme. Maximum of 5-story series. Judges will consider civic impact and evaluate the circumstances prompting the coverage and how it helped the community through the crisis. (COVID-19 coverage without a public service theme should be entered into the appropriate contest category; for example, a profile about an essential worker may be entered into the Personality Profile category.)
32. **BEST SPANISH COVERAGE OF LATINO COMMUNITY** This award will give special consideration to stories that address issues positively impacting the Latino community such as jobs, immigration, crime reduction, education, entrepreneur, sports, economic impact etc. Stories should be written in Spanish. Judges will consider quality of writing, graphics, photography and layout. Submit PDFs. Entries that represent a team effort should list team members and designate lead editor.