

2025

ILLINOIS PRESS ASSOCIATION

Advertising Contest Rules



Questions: Contact Cindy Bedolli at cbedolli@illinoispress.org
or call 217-241-1300

ADVERTISING CONTEST DEADLINE: 5 P.M. JAN. 23, 2026

Save the date!

IPF Convention

June 4, 2026

Par-A-Dice Hotel Casino

7 Blackjack Blvd.

East Peoria, IL 61611

2025 ILLINOIS NEWSPAPER AD CONTEST RULES

(For work published Jan. 1, 2025 – Dec. 31, 2025)

1. A daily newspaper is defined as a newspaper that produces a print or an electronic edition more than three days a week.
2. To compute circulation, both print and electronic subscriptions should be counted. Do not double count free electronic subscriptions which are provided to paid print subscribers.
3. The contest is open to Illinois Press Association members who are dues-paying members. No associate members, special interest publications or ad agencies may enter. The Association code is: **IPA2025**
4. Out-of-state IPA member newspapers are eligible to enter all categories excluding Advertising Excellence. Entries in other categories must pertain to Illinois advertisers. These newspapers are not eligible to earn points for the sweepstakes awards.
5. **Entries must be received at the IPA office by Friday, Jan. 23, 2026.** Winners will be announced via email after judging is complete, excluding placements, general excellence, and sweepstakes. Placements, general excellence, and sweepstakes winners will be announced Thursday, June 4, 2026, during the IPF Convention
6. All entries must have been published within the calendar year Jan.1, 2025 – December 31, 2025.
7. Entry fees are:
 - Entries submitted before Jan. 13, 2026, will be \$8.00 per entry.
 - Entries submitted between the dates of Jan. 13 – 23, 2026 will be \$10.00 per entry.
 - If the deadline is extended, any late entries will be at a higher entry fee.
8. Each entry must be from an individual newspaper and entered in the circulation division according to the circulation numbers effective October 1, 2025. The contest is open to all newspapers as individual properties. The Association's goal is to encourage all newspapers to enter, and the rules treat every entity equally.

Newspapers with shared staff are required to enter work under the flag of the newspaper for which the work was created. If it was created for multiple newspapers, it must be entered under the flag of one newspaper in the highest division.

Ads generated for two or more newspapers may be entered for one newspaper only.

Circulation divisions for all classes of competition are:

 - Division G = NonDaily
 - Division H = Daily
9. NonDailies include semi- and tri-weekly. Semi-weeklies with different names are not considered separate publications. They may be submitted as consecutive issues.
10. There is no limit to the number of entries where noted.

11. Group papers with essentially the same content or makeup can submit only one entry in categories which specify dates or two consecutive issues. Group papers which have completely separate advertising staffs for each newspaper may submit one entry per staff in those categories.

12. All entries must be submitted electronically at <http://www.newspapercontest.com/Contests/IllinoisPressAssociation.aspx>

13. Ads may be published in print or online. Each entry should be a PDF, JPG or GIF file type. Full page PDFs may be uploaded as long as the ad to be judged is obvious. Best practice: Name the entry the same as the name of the advertiser.

14. An entry will be disqualified if:

- the entry was not published within the official contest period
- payment is not made prior to February 1, 2026
- specific rules as outlined in each class are not followed

Newspapers will not be notified of entry disqualifications. No refunds will be issued.

Advertising entries do NOT need to be designed in-house. However, the idea for the design must have originated with the news organization. As long as the material is produced at the newspaper's direction, the entries can be submitted in the appropriate contest.

15. **AWARDS** - Sweepstakes winners for advertising achievement will be selected on the basis of points scored in the various categories of this contest. Division trophies will be awarded for the top scoring newspaper in each division. The trophy will not travel.

16. Decision of judges is final. This year, Hoosier Press Association members will be judging our contest.

17. When registering for contest, each registrant must submit the name, title, email address and phone number of a staff member who may be called on to serve as a judge for a reciprocating association's contest. You can list yourself as the volunteer judge.

18. Awards that are not picked up at the convention will be mailed to the newspaper at the newspaper's expense.

19. IPA has the option to reduce divisions to ALL in any class depending on number of entries. This will be determined before judging. Sweepstake points will still be awarded; points will be applied to regular divisions.

**CONTEST DEADLINE:
5 P.M. FRIDAY, JAN. 23, 2026**

Questions? Contact Cindy Bedolli at cbedolli@illinoispress.org
or call 217-241-1300

2025 ILLINOIS NEWSPAPER AD CONTEST CLASSES

CLASS 1 - GENERAL ADVERTISING EXCELLENCE

Submit PDF file of entire newspaper editions excluding inserts. Criteria: General excellence is defined as overall advertising. Upload two issues from the month of May 2025 (not necessarily consecutive). Judging will be based on advertising, layout and design, creativity, effective use of typefaces and presswork. One entry per newspaper.

CLASS 2 – REAL ESTATE AD

Any ad or campaign featuring real estate, development, mobile homes, condominiums, vacation homes, residential, farms or investment properties.

CLASS 3 – AUTOMOTIVE AD

Any ad featuring sales and/or services of any motorized vehicle: cars, trucks, motorcycles, boats, airplanes, all-terrain vehicles, personal watercraft; and any peripheral such as tires, parts, motors, service stations, etc.

CLASS 4 – HEALTH CARE AD

Any ad featuring the medical or health care profession: pharmacies, eye care, dental, hospitals, assisted living, etc.

CLASS 5 - FOOD AD

Any ad featuring food or beverage: grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants, taverns, etc.

CLASS 6 – SERVICE/INSTITUTIONAL AD

Any ad featuring a not-retail business: banks, attorneys, accountants, florists, funeral homes, schools, plumbers, veterinarians, spas, etc.

CLASS 7 – GARDEN, YARD & AGRICULTURE AD

Any ad featuring: swimming pools, nurseries, landscaping, fencing, tree services or farming equipment.

CLASS 8 – RELIGIOUS / NONPROFIT AD

Any ad featuring: religious gatherings (including church, synagogue, temple, etc.), clubs, organizations/associations, etc.

CLASS 9 – MISCELLANEOUS AD

Any ad featuring general merchandise not related to the previous categories.

CLASS 10 – POLITICAL AD

Any ad for a political candidate and any ad in support or defeat of a candidate or election issue.

CLASS 11 – BEST SMALL AD

Ad must not be larger than a total of 10 column inches. Ad may be any type of newspaper display advertising EXCEPT house ads. Judging is based on ad originality, creativity in the use of typeface and artwork and reader appeal. Paid, single advertiser only.

CLASS 12 – BEST COLOR AD

These ads must be originally conceptualized and may not be agency created. Judging is based on quality and effect of color, originality and reader appeal. House ads may not be entered in this category; paid single advertiser only.

CLASS 13 - BEST NEWSPAPER PROMOTION

Upload a single ad promoting any aspect of your newspaper. Judging is based on ad originality, creativity in the use of typeface and artwork and reader appeal.

CLASS 14 – BEST ANNUAL SPECIAL SECTION

Sections must be published annually. Judging will be based on the concept of the section, creativity and effective use of typefaces and presswork. Upload PDF file of entire publication.

CLASS 15 – BEST ONE-TIME SPECIAL SECTION

This class includes all sections that are not routinely published. Vendor-funded sections may be submitted in this category. Judging will be based on the concept of the section, creativity, effective use of typefaces and presswork. Upload PDF file of entire publication. Multiple files may be uploaded.

CLASS 16 – BEST COMMUNITY FOCUS SPECIAL SECTION

This category is intended for annual progress editions, a newcomer's guide, a newspaper's anniversary edition or any comprehensive sections that cover a broad base of interest to the newspaper's readership. Sections may be published annually or as a one-time special section. Judging will be based on comprehensive coverage of the community (and/or its history) and usefulness to the reader. Upload PDF file or entire publication.

CLASS 17 – BEST CLASSIFIED AD

Upload a PDF file of the best classified display ad which may include but is not limited to auto, real estate, employment and directories. Judging will be based on creativity and originality of the promotion, design and reader appeal of the ads. No house ads. Paid ads only.

CLASS 18 – BEST SHARED PAGE/SIGNATURE PAGE

Upload PDF file of entire page for a shared page/signature page ad. Judging will be based on creativity, unifying theme, use of typeface and artwork and overall composition. Single page only but a double truck will be judged as a single page. For multiple page examples, submit one page and use explanation box to describe project.

CLASS 19 – BEST NICHE PUBLICATION

This may include any printed product that is distributed as a stand-alone product for a specific, targeted market. These products may also have been inserted into the newspaper and include such items as an auto trader, antique monthly or a magazine. Judging will be based on creativity, design and reader appeal of the publications. Use the explanation box to describe the entry and how it was distributed. Upload PDF of entire publication.

CLASS 20 – BEST GROUP PROMOTION

This category is for businesses located within a specific shopping location; and promoting an event such as a downtown sidewalk sale, moonlight madness or other shopping center/mall/downtown promotion. Upload PDF files of one or more examples. JPG photos may also be submitted.

CLASS 21 – BEST HOLIDAY AD

Upload a PDF file featuring a holiday ad of your choice. Judging will be based on originality, creativity in the use of typeface and artwork and reader appeal. No house ads. Paid advertising only.

CLASS 22 – BEST ONLINE AD

Judging criteria: Visual appeal, creativity in design, originality and content of an online ad appearing on the newspaper's website or any form of social media will be considered. Entry notes: Submit PDF or you may submit the complete URL of the ad. Paid advertising only.

SWEEPSTAKES & DIVISION AWARDS

Winners of the Sweepstakes Awards will be selected based on points scored in the various categories of this contest.

The **SAM ZITO AWARD of EXCELLENCE** was established and contributed by Shaw Media in 2004, honoring Sam Zito, Senior Account Executive for the Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, and is awarded for advertising achievement to the outstanding weekly newspaper in Division G, H, or I. This is a traveling trophy.

The **JAMES S. COPLEY MEMORIAL TROPHY** was established and contributed by Copley Newspapers in 1991, in memory of James S. Copley, former owner of Copley Newspapers, Inc., and is awarded for advertising achievement to the outstanding daily newspaper in Division G, H, or I. This is a traveling trophy.

An award plaque will be presented to all first-place winners. Other winners will receive certificates.

SWEEPSTAKES TROPHY SCORING:

Points are awarded in the various contest divisions for first, second, third and fourth place, ranking as follows:

1st Place	5 points
2nd Place	3 points
3rd Place	2 points
4th Place	1 point

DIVISION TROPHIES will be awarded to the top-scoring newspapers in each division.