

# 2025 HSPA Journalism Contest

## Rules & Category Descriptions

### Association Code: HSPA

#### CONTEST PERIOD

Entries must be published between April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.

#### DEADLINE

Submit all entries at [www.newspapercontest.com/hspa](http://www.newspapercontest.com/hspa) and summary sheet by 5 p.m. Thursday, April 24, 2025.

Checks should be mailed no later than May 16, 2025 to:

HSPA Foundation BNC  
125 W. Market St., Suite 300  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Questions? Call (317) 803-4772 or email [sgoldsby@hspa.com](mailto:sgoldsby@hspa.com).

HSPA phone and email support available through noon, Thursday, April 24, 2025.

#### FEES

Each newspaper pays an entry fee based on circulation as follows.

(N1) \$80 - Division One – Nondailies less than 1,500

(N2) \$80 - Division Two – Nondailies 1,500 or more

(D3) \$95 - Division Three – Dailies less than 6,000

(D4) \$130 - Division Four – Dailies 6,000 or more

May submit three entries in each category except where noted in rules. Additional entries may be included for \$10 per entry.

#### ENTRIES

Entries must be entirely the original work of the person or people submitting them; must be published on newspaper's website or published and distributed as part of the paper.

Judges will award first, second and third places. No honorable mentions will be given. If three or fewer entries are submitted in a category, the judges may opt to give no awards. Judges may not award a second or third without a first and must give at least a first place in any category with four or more entries.

#### PLEASE NOTE

- Stories should be submitted as official newspaper archived copies in PDF format, showing the headline and date of publication. Stories outside the contest dates will be disqualified.
- If an article or photo appears in two or more publications, it must be entered by only one newspaper. Duplicate entries will be rejected.
- Freelancers', stringers' or correspondents' work must be submitted by the newspaper where it first published.
- Any entries listing more than three writers will be recognized as "Staff" on all plaques and certificates
- Designation of daily or nondaily is determined by number of print editions each week: Nondaily – three or fewer; daily – more than three.

#### ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS

#### Association Code: HSPA

Step 1 — Visit [www.newspapercontest.com/hspa](http://www.newspapercontest.com/hspa).

Complete rules are available online.

Step 2 — Click on the "Register for Editorial" tab.

Step 3 — Each newspaper must have its own unique email address to be able to submit entries in the contest. If multiple people submit entries, they must use the same email and password. Register on the contest website using your email address. You will receive a confirmation email, which you will need to complete your registration.

**The "Association Code" you will use is HSPA** (this is case sensitive.)

Step 4 — On this website, select your newspaper name. If you do not see your paper listed or if the information is incorrect, please call Shawn Goldsby at HSPA (317) 803-4772. Your Division is selected for you based on your circulation. Fill in the preparer's name.

Step 5 — Select "Editorial" to begin submitting entries. All required fields are marked with a red asterisk.\*

Step 6 — Select the contest category. These are drop-down menus for your convenience. This field will clear each time you save an entry, so you must select a category for each new entry. Special instructions will appear below it.

Step 7 — Include the name of the person or people who should be credited for any award. If more than 3, we will list as staff only.

Step 8 — Add your file or files. You can drag and drop files or use the "Add files" button to navigate your files. Files should be in PDF format except photos, which should be in high-resolution JPG format.

Step 9 — When you have completed each entry, click the "Save" button. Do not click the "Back to list" button or you will lose the entry you just completed. After clicking "Save," you will be directed back to the list of your entries. You may not change an entry, but you may delete an entry and resubmit it.

Step 10 — To submit another entry, click "Add New Entry." As long as you have not logged out of the system, your newspaper name will still be in place and you can simply start at Step 6 again. You may log out and log back in later to continue adding entries. You will need to select your newspaper name each time you log in.

Step 11 — If you are done submitting entries, please review the list. When done uploading all your entries, click the "Report Tab" to preview your entries.

## WRITING AWARDS

Entries must be published between April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.

Judging will be based on clarity, thoroughness and enterprise.

### ✓1. Best News Coverage Under Deadline Pressure

Recognizes excellence displayed by an individual or team in covering a developing news event in one print publication cycle across all platforms.

### ✓2. Best News Coverage With No Deadline Pressure

Recognizes excellence by an individual or team in reporting an event or situation where an immediate deadline is not a factor. An entry may include more than one story on a single subject, as long as they were by the same writer or team. Submit no more than four stories on the same subject.

### 3. Best General Commentary

Recognizes a regular local column or blog on any subject, written by any individual staff member on any platform. Any three samples of the columnist's work make up one entry. Please note only one entry per writer may be entered.

### 4. Best Editorial Writer

Recognizes excellence in editorial writing by a single author on any platform. Judging is based on persuasiveness, worthiness of purpose, clarity and effectiveness.

Three samples of an entrant's work constitute one entry. Only one entry per writer. (Only two editorials in a series may be submitted.)

### 5. Best Business/Economic News Coverage

Recognizes a single article or series of articles (not to exceed three) on the same topic by one writer or a team that emphasizes analysis and research. Articles may appear in the same issue or several issues.

### 6. Nina Mason Pulliam Environmental Journalism Award

Recognizes excellence in a story or stories concerning environmental issues impacting their community.

One winner will be chosen from all divisions and will receive a cash prize of \$1,000 and will receive travel assistance to attend the National Society of Environmental Journalists Conference.

May upload up to six articles to be considered one entry. (No points toward General Excellence)

### 7. Headline Writing

Recognizes excellence and creativity in writing headlines. Judging will be based on whether the headline fulfills the mission of the story, clarity and creativity. May include news brief and editorial headlines. Three headlines equal one entry.

### 8. Best Short Feature Story

Recognizes a single article, 1,000 words or less, by any reporter that deals with people and their lifestyles, activities or concerns. Judges consider reader interest and effectiveness in conveying human element and quality of reporting and writing.

### 9. Best Profile Feature

Recognizes the best single story focusing on a person. Judges will give emphasis to timeliness, quality of writing and depth of reporting, including multiple sources and way the author(s) sets the tone, mood or setting.

### ✓10. Best In-Depth Feature or Feature Package

Recognizes feature material published as a single article, set or related articles on the same day, or a series of related articles by the same writer or team. Submit no more than four articles.

### 11. Best Sports Event Coverage

Recognizes a main "game story" from coverage of sporting events, most likely by a single writer but may be a multiple byline on a single story or in the package. Sidebars (pull-outs, graphics, breakouts) by the same writer may be included.

### ✓12. Best Sports News/Feature Coverage

Recognizes in-depth coverage of sports personalities and issues. Entries may consist of a single article or a series by one writer or a team.

## PHOTOGRAPHY & MULTIMEDIA AWARDS

### 13. Best General News Photo

Coverage of planned events where advanced planning was possible. Examples include, but are not limited to, courtroom events, funerals, news conferences, mock exercises and campaigns.

✓ = Category eligible for Story of the Year

#### **14. Best Sports Feature Photo**

Feature a photograph from a sporting event. Image showing the thrill of victory, agony of defeat, fans or moments from within the bounds of a sporting event would fit this category.

#### **15. Best Sports Action Photo**

Action photograph from an athletic event which captures what it means to compete. Athletic practices or warm-ups would not fit this category.

#### **16. Best Feature Photo**

This category recognizes a photograph of found moments or slices of life. An image that shows graphic and aesthetic qualities of a subject with strong emphasis on composition may also be entered here.

#### **17. Best Portrait**

A single photograph that captures a unique aspect of a subject's character and personality.

#### **18. Best Multiple Picture Group**

A group of photographs on a central theme published as part of a package or series. Must include at least three and not more than 9 photographs. No collages or diptychs are allowed. **Enter all photographs from a picture group into one entry.**

#### **19. Best Website**

Judges evaluate news content, design and presentation, navigation, interactivity and connectivity to other sites. Type your newspaper website's URL in the Headline box and in the appropriate URL field, adding a user name/password in the Comments field if site is behind a paywall.

#### **20. Best Special Section**

Recognizes a special section published one time during the contest period. Any topic is eligible.

## **BLUE RIBBON AWARDS**

#### **21. Blue Ribbon Newspapers**

The Blue Ribbon Award, presented each year to one daily and one nondaily newspaper, is the highest accolade of the HSPA Foundation's Better Newspaper Contest. It is based on an overall evaluation of editorial quality.

The question posed by the judges is which paper, all variables considered, does the best job of serving its readers.

Newspapers **MUST** submit three complete editions: one from the month of September 2024, one from the month of December 2024 and one from the month of March 2025.

Judges consider breadth and depth of coverage, quality of reporting and copy editing, news judgment and content balance, general appearance, imaginative approach to problem news areas, originality, reader interest and overall professionalism.

## **GENERAL EXCELLENCE**

General Excellence Award will be given to one paper in each of the four circulation divisions based on a point system.

Winners in this category exemplify excellence in all aspects of newspaper publication, including mechanical excellence, editorial content, layout and general appearance.

Points will be awarded as follows:

10 points for first, 6 points for second, 2 points for third.

This category will not be judged but will be an accumulation of points earned in the other categories.

#### **Photo of the Year**

Winner chosen from the 1st place winners in categories 13-18.

**No points toward General Excellence.)**

#### **Story of the Year**

Winner chosen from 1st place winners out of categories 1, 2, 10 and 12. **No points toward General Excellence.**