



January 7, 2026

Greetings, NETPA!

For 99 years, North & East Texas Press Association has been encouraging and promoting higher standards of journalism. We have a wide circle of NETPA members and friends, and we hope to celebrate with you all at our 2026 conference.

Now's the time to renew your membership or to join for the first time. Being part of this association, networking and learning from each other is critical as we strive to make our corners of the world a little better, to inform and educate our readers, to improve our publications and to keep our industry and our operations thriving. If you're ready to join or need to renew your membership and pay your dues, contact NETPA secretary Wyndi Veigel-Gaudette at wyndi.veigel@gmail.com soonest.

We have officially launched the **2026 NETPA Better Newspaper Contest**, and everything will be centered once again on our online submission and judging platform at newspapercontest.com/NETPA. New in 2026, we will now award a News Photographer of the Year and also a Sports Photographer of the Year.

This year's contest deadline is **Monday, February 9, 2026**.

Stay tuned for additional information on the NETPA Scholarship. Make plans now to publicize it in your print and online editions then reach out to your local school newspaper and yearbook advisers to help spread the word. NETPA has had some outstanding scholarship recipients in the past, and we look forward to encouraging the education of more dynamic young journalists.

Along those same lines, this year we're implementing an on-site contest during our annual convention, pairing our journalism veterans with young journalists for a live event in the midst of our activities **April 9-11 at the Lone Star Lodge & Marina**. Our 2026 Convention Chair, Abigail Bardwell, is pulling together all the details for a great experience on the shores of Lake Ray Roberts in Pilot Point. Look for updates in the weeks and months to come.

Please take some time now to help us connect with more of our colleagues across the region. Reach out to journalists and publications. Encourage them to attend this year's conference. We look forward to welcoming a healthy crowd to Pilot Point in April.

Standby for more information via netpa.org and facebook.com/NorthEastTexasPressAssociation. For questions about the 2026 NETPA Better Newspaper Contest, contact me by phone or email.

James Draper
2026 NETPA Contest Chair
Gladewater Mirror
Office: 903.845.2235 | Cell: 903.738.6094
jdraper@gladewatermirror.com

2026

BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST

Join Us for the 2026 NETPA Convention

April 9-11

Lone Star Lodge & Marina

Pilot Point, Texas

Contest features: 13 Major Categories

General Excellence • Advertising • Column Writing • Editorials
Feature Stories • Headline Writing • Page Design
News Writing • Sports Writing • Sports Coverage
Feature Photo • Sports Photo • News Photo

With additional awards for:

Journalist of the Year
News Photographer of the Year
Sports Photographer of the Year
Special Section or Special Edition
Community Service
Sweepstakes

CONTEST DEADLINE:
Monday, February 9, 2026

ENTRY FEE:
\$25 per Newspaper

- Regardless of number of entries -

Fee must be paid before contest entries will be judged.

Entry fee must be received by February 9, 2026.

Mail Entry Fee to:

Wyndi Veigel-Gaudette, The Dublin Citizen, 938 N. Patrick, Dublin, TX 76446

Pay with credit card/debit card via email to wyndi.veigel@gmail.com

Payment questions? Call Wyndi at 254.485.4408

NETPA CONTEST RULES

Instructions on how to register and place your entries can be found at newspapercontest.com/NETPA

1. The contest is open to dues paying members of the North and East Texas Press Association.
2. CONTEST PERIOD: All entries must have been originally published during calendar year 2025.
3. Except for Column Writing, no newspaper shall be given more than one award in any contest category where points awarded count toward the association's Sweepstakes Awards.
4. Entries published in more than one newspaper may be entered only one time – in the largest circulation category in which they appeared.
5. ELIGIBILITY: The contest is under the full supervision of NETPA and is open to all daily, semi-weekly and weekly newspapers that have paid their current 2026-2027 NETPA member dues statement.
 - Combination Dailies (morning and evening publications) are entitled to one entry in each contest, but that entry may be made up of material from either or both editions.
 - Semi-Weekly Newspapers (publications carrying one name but publishing more than once per week) must enter the semi-weekly division.
6. DIVISION REQUIREMENTS: A newspaper must compete in its circulation bracket based on the October 2025 U.S. Postal Service statement of total paid circulation.
7. PREPARATION OF ENTRIES: Only one (1) set of entries may be submitted in each category, except column writing, in which two (2) sets of entries may be submitted.
 - Register at www.newspapercontest.com/NETPA
8. NO EXPLANATION: Letter and memos explaining entries may accompany only Editorial and Community Service entries for which background information may be helpful to the contest judges.
9. JUDGES: Judges will be selected by the Contest Chairman and shall include professional journalists.
10. AWARDS: Awards will be announced Saturday, April 11, 2026, at Lone Star Lodge & Marina in Pilot Point, Texas, during the North & East Texas Press Association Convention. First place winners will come forward to receive plaques. Certificates will be distributed to second, third and fourth place winners after the awards ceremony. Copies of the Winners' Circle with comments on entries will be available at the conclusion of the awards brunch.
11. AI CONTENT: All AI-generated elements are excluded from competition. Submission of AI-generated material will, if proven, result in the disqualification of the newspaper from all categories in the NETPA Better Newspaper Contest.

DIVISIONS

Updated for 2026, there will be now be four competition divisions instead of five. Dailies will compete in Divisions 1 or 2 along with Semi-Weeklies, depending on circulation. Weeklies will compete in either Division 3 or 4, depending on circulation.

DIVISION 1: Semi-Weeklies and Dailies more than 1500 circulation.

DIVISION 2: Semi-Weeklies and Dailies less than 1500 circulation.

DIVISION 3: Weeklies more than 1500 circulation.

DIVISION 4: Weeklies less than 1500 circulation.

Circulation numbers will be used from TPA to assign divisions.

CATEGORIES

GENERAL EXCELLENCE: Submit two (2) complete issues published in calendar year 2025. One must be from **May** or **September** 2025, the second from any month of your choosing. Wire copy and non-staff produced copy will not be considered. Judging will be based on news coverage, quality of writing, composition/display, headlines, use of photos and artwork, front page and specialty pages, such as editorial page, family life, social page and sports page. Judges will consider both issues as one entry.

ADVERTISING: Each paper may submit as many as three advertisements (composed entirely by your staff) from any issues published in calendar year 2025. Judging will be based on the selling power of copy, originality/creativity, layout/design, use of photos, graphics and typography. Judges will consider all three ads as one entry.

COLUMN WRITING: Columns may be humorous, serious, sports, etc. Submit two (2) entries of staff-written columns originally composed and published in calendar year 2025. (NOTE: Two columnists may submit separate sets of entries.) Each set of columns will be judged as one entry. They may be written by your staff on any subject in any style. Judging will be based on lead, subject matter and quality and style of writing.

EDITORIALS: Submit two (2) entries of staff-written editorials originally written and published in calendar year 2025. Judging will be based on quality, lead, style of writing, subject matter and local significance. Judges will consider both editorials as one entry.

FEATURE STORY: Submit two (2) entries of staff-written features originally written and published in calendar year 2025. Judging will be based on content/subject matter, quality, style, lead and presentation, including layout, design, headlines, typography, photos and use of color. Judges will consider both feature stories as one entry.

HEADLINE WRITING: Submit entries of your three best headlines from any issues published in calendar year 2025. The headlines must have been written by a regular staff member for a locally produced staff story. Headline entries can come from any section of a regular edition. Judging will be based on accuracy, cleverness, creativity, impact and originality. Judges will consider all three headlines as one entry.

PAGE DESIGN: Submit one PDF file of two complete editions from any month in 2025, including special sections or special pages. Judging will be based on readability, innovation, color, graphics, design features, typography, photos and other artwork. Judges will consider both editions as one entry.

NEWS WRITING: Submit full-page PDF files of two complete staff-written news stories published in calendar year 2025. Please ID submitted story in online notes. Judging will be based on quality of writing, lead, news value and enterprise. Judges will consider both news stories as one entry.

SPORTS WRITING: Submit full-page PDF files of two (2) complete staff-written sports stories published in calendar year 2025. Please ID submitted story in online notes. May include sports features. Judging will be based on quality of writing, lead, news value and enterprise. Judges will consider both news stories as one entry.

SPORTS COVERAGE: Submit two (2) full-page PDF files of sports pages originally published in April 2025 and one from any month of your choosing. Please ID in online notes any sports writing or photos not produced by your staff. Judging will be based on quality of writing, range of coverage, photos, layout/design and suitability of headlines. Judges will consider both issues as one entry.

FEATURE PHOTO: Submit two (2) full-page PDF files of two feature photos originally photographed and published in calendar year 2025. Submit only photos taken by members of your regular staff or compensated contributors. Please ID submitted photo in online notes. Judging will be based on reader interest, composition, quality of cutline, enterprise and innovation, and reproduction. Judges will consider both photos as one entry.

NEWS PHOTO: Submit two (2) full-page PDF files of two news photos originally photographed and published in calendar year 2025. Submit only photos taken by members of your regular staff or compensated contributors. Please ID submitted photo in online notes. Judging will be based on timeliness, composition, quality of cutline, enterprise and innovation, and reproduction. Judges will consider both photos as one entry.

SPORTS PHOTO: Submit two (2) full-page PDF files of two sports photos originally photographed and published in calendar year 2025. Submit only photos taken by members of your regular staff or compensated contributors. Please ID submitted photo in online notes. Judging will be based on action, composition, quality of cutline, enterprise and innovation, and reproduction. Judges will consider both photos as one entry.

NEWS PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR: All divisions will compete against each other for this award. Submit six (6) full-page PDF files of news, feature or stand-alone photos that were a) taken by the same photographer and b) published in different editions of the same newspaper during 2025. One entry per newspaper.

SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR: All divisions will compete against each other for this award. Submit six (6) full-page PDF files of sports photos a) taken by the same photographer and b) published in different editions of the same newspaper during 2025. One entry per newspaper.

JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR: All divisions will compete against each other for this award. Submit full page PDF files of five (5) original stories by the same writer, for the same newspaper and published during 2025. One entry per newspaper.

SPECIAL SECTION OR SPECIAL EDITION: Daily Division • Semi-Weekly Division • Weekly Division
Submit one (1) entry (complete copy) per newspaper published during calendar year 2025. Upload link to e-edition or pdf file of complete section. Judges will consider the equality of both editorial and advertising content.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: All divisions will compete against each other for this award. Submit a digital portfolio (multi-page PDF) with examples of the relevant coverage (i.e. news, photos, editorials, letters, and programs) of your newspaper's support of one community project or issue conducted during the contest calendar year. The focus may range from championing a local effort or need to spotlighting an ongoing challenge or concern. Entries must have been published during the contest calendar year. Include a letter describing the background and results of the service. PLEASE NOTE: Community Service awards are not included in sweepstakes calculations.

SWEEPSTAKES: The North and East Texas Press Association Newspaper Contest includes a Sweepstakes Award for each division. Awards are earned by point accumulation in contest categories (not including Special Section or Special Edition, Journalist of the Year, Photographer of the Year and Community Service.) Points shall be computed on the following scale: 1st Place: 125 points • 2nd Place: 75 points • 3rd Place: 50 points • 4th Place: 25 points

SPECIAL NOTE: In the event of a tie in sweepstakes in any division, the tie will be broken by determining which newspaper has the most first place awards. Should this be tied, the paper then having the most second place awards will be declared the winner. The procedure will be followed through third and fourth places if necessary.

Contest Awards are Engraved Plaques for 1st place & Certificates of merit for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th places in all divisions.

Contest Checklist:

1. Did you mail or submit electronically the \$25 contest entry fee?
2. Did you clearly identify entries in online notes so judges can ID correct submission?
3. Will the entry be received no later than Monday, February 9, 2025?

Thank you all and good luck! See you April 9-11 in Pilot Point...