2021 Writing, Photo and Multimedia Contest Winners

Quill and Scroll International Honor Society
Writing Categories

- Editorial
- News
- Pandemic Coverage: Single Story
- Pandemic Coverage: Series
- Feature
- Column
- Review

- In-Depth Reporting/Individual
- In-Depth Reporting/Team
- Sports Feature Writing
- Sports Game Coverage
- Profile
- Political
- Health, Science and Ag
- Climate and Environment
Category 1: Editorial Writing
First Place: Connor Raffa, Trinity Preparatory School, Winter Park, FL
“The Electoral College Should be Abolished”

Judge’s Comment: The Lead’s staff took on a national news topic – abolishing the Electoral College – and did so at a near professional level. The piece is well structured, thoroughly reported and clearly written. The accompanying infographics add an additional level of precision and clarity to the team’s nuanced written argument. It's hard to come away from this article without learning something or forming a strong opinion. The Lead's staff raised the bar for student journalists with this work and should be proud.

December 2020

Opinion

THE ELECTIONAL COLLEGE

With claims of near final and a few dozen votes, the runoff of 2020 has come to the finish line. As Americans were voted into the presence of two campfire点燃了的 Campfire点燃了的 Campfire点燃了的 Campfire点燃了，Campfire点燃了的 Campfire点燃了的 Campfire点燃了 the margin of one single thousandth of a vote, the final margin was so close that the outcome was uncertain. We do not have a winner as the presidential election is now decided by the House of Representatives, with no clear result in the Senate. The House of Representatives was tasked with determining the outcome of the election. The results are final, and the winner is President-elect Joe Biden.

In the context of the 2020 election, the Electoral College is a system of electors who vote for president and vice president of the United States. The number of electors each state has is based on the state’s population, with larger states having more electors. The electors cast their votes for the candidate who wins the most popular votes in their state. If no candidate wins a majority of the electoral votes, the House of Representatives selects the president.

In this year’s election, the Electoral College played a crucial role in determining the outcome. With no candidate receiving a majority of the vote, the House of Representatives voted to elect Joe Biden as the next president of the United States.

The Electoral College system is often criticized for its ability to circumvent the popular will. In 2000, for example, George W. Bush was declared the winner of the presidency despite losing the popular vote to Al Gore. This has led some to argue that the Electoral College system is undemocratic and should be abolished.

However, the system has its defenders. Supporters argue that the Electoral College ensures a balance of power between states of different sizes and provides a safety valve in case of a close election. They also argue that the system helps prevent “irresponsible candidates” from gaining the presidency.

With the Democratic victory in the House of Representatives, the Electoral College system was put to the test in 2020. While some states have clearly indicated their support for Biden, others have remained divided. In the end, the House of Representatives voted to elect Biden as the next president, emphasizing the importance of the Electoral College in determining the outcome of presidential elections.

Though the Electoral College system is often criticized, it remains an essential part of the American political system. As long as it continues to serve its intended purpose of ensuring a fair and representative election, it will remain a critical component of our democracy. The future of the Electoral College may be uncertain, but its importance cannot be overstated.

December 2020

Opinion

GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN EVENTS BY STATE

STATE

ELECTORAL VOTES UNDER THE NPCV

Election that have certified the NPCV

Election that have not certified the NPCV

General Election Campaign Event by a 2020 Presidential Candidate

2020 ELECTION: THE BREAKDOWN

The 2020 election was a historic event, with a record-breaking number of people voting. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans turned out in record numbers to cast their ballots. The election was not only a referendum on the presidency of Donald Trump, but also a crucial test of our democracy’s ability to withstand a global crisis.

The outcome of the election was never truly in doubt. WithAILY MILLION VOTERS cast their ballots, President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris won a decisive victory over President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence. The race was closely contested, with Biden holding a narrow lead throughout the election night.

Throughout the campaign, both candidates focused on the issues that mattered most to voters. Biden emphasized the need for urgent action on the economy, health care, and climate change, while Trump's campaign was characterized by a focus on patriotism and law and order.

The 2020 election was not only a referendum on the policies of the two candidates, but also a statement on the state of American democracy. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Americans came together to vote, demonstrating the resilience of our democracy.

In conclusion, the 2020 election was a turning point in American history. It was a test of our democracy’s ability to withstand a global crisis, and it was a resounding victory for the values and principles that have long defined our nation. As we move forward, we must continue to work together to build a better future for all Americans.
Second Place: Ulaa Kuziez, Parkway West HS, Ballwin, MO

“Activism is not a performance. Take real actions.”

Judge’s Comment: Through both their own writing and the quotes woven throughout the piece, the Pathfinder staff demonstrated the level of research and expertise that editorial writing requires. The writing is direct yet forceful. Overall, the Pathfinder staff stood out by presenting a clear call to action aimed at their high school audience, developing a solid justification for their argument, and offering a range of tangible tools for action. Well done.

Activism is not a performance. Take real actions.

Pathfinder Editorial Board | November 24, 2020

Throughout 2020, we have witnessed several dramatic issues sweep across America. A virus has decimated communities. Wildfires have raged through forests, burning everything in their path. Police have continued to murder Black Americans. In response, people took to social media to express their concerns.

One issue that has especially sparked a reaction on social media was the United States’ wake-up call to centuries-old systemic racism. Spurred by the brutal murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of the police, many Americans became aware that this is not just a problem with a few judgmentally-impaired police officers. Rather, white supremacist violence is fundamental to the system of policing. While varying degrees of understanding exist, more and more of us are realizing that America is an inherently racist country. Our “democracy” was built on the basis of violently stealing land from the Indigenous people of the region and then destroying that land for a profit, using enslaved people’s labor.
Third Place: Rose Kanaley, Shawnee Mission East HS, Prairie Village, KS
“Teen Abstinence”

Judge’s Comment: Sex can be a challenging topic for anyone to publicly discuss, and as The Harbinger's staff makes clear, it's often especially fraught for teens trying to communicate with parents, educators and doctors. Rather than shying away from the issue, though, this team tackles the topic with confidence and honesty. Their pointed argument highlights the importance of open communication surrounding teen sex while advocating for important health and education resources. Great work.

Editorial: Abstinence is an unrealistic method of birth control for teens
By Editorial Board
Posted March 9, 2020

You throw the box of granola bars in your basket, hoping it covers up what you really came to Target for: the Plan B pill. Once you ensure yourself no one can see the “emergency contraceptive” peaking out, you rush through Target’s self-checkout and pray that your mom’s best friend or your English teacher doesn’t get a peek inside your grocery bag.

Your parents said you couldn’t go on birth control because that would mean you’re having sex. And they don’t like that idea. They’re sure that abstinence is the best form of birth control. But here you are now, throwing the Plan B box in the parking lot trashcan so the evidence can’t be found at home.

The “best” form of birth control that parents and teachers try to prescribe to us is abstinence — it’s unrealistic. While it may come as a shock, yes, teens are having sex. And denying them access to safe forms of birth control is only hurting them.

For parents, yes, the idea of their children participating in a peg adult activity may make them shift in their seat. But inhibiting the use of a product associated with sex doesn’t inhibit the act itself. Sorry mom and dad.

If teens have only ever heard adults preaching abstinence, they won’t know what to use or do to protect against pregnancy and STDs when they have sex for the first time. And according to Planned Parenthood, 55% of both males and females have had sex by age 18.
Category 2:
News Writing
First Place: Kelly Murphy, Shawnee Mission East HS, Prairie Village, KS

“Dependent on Disposables”

Judge’s Comment: Kelly writes a thorough and engaging story about many aspects of teen vaping. Her story covers a shifting product market. She examines how teachers and administrators deal with the issue. Her story also includes a teen dealer, as well as other ways teens get vaping products. the story provides a health aspect and examines what teen users think. And she looks at disciplinary consequences. Excellent quotes also carry the story.
An inside look at teaching during a pandemic

Zoe DeYoung, Staff Writer | October 21, 2020

Before we left school March 13 of last school year, we were told to empty our lockers and bring all of our textbooks home.

Some felt this was an overreaction by administration, but many minds were changed after seeing the data behind the decision. COVID-19 took the world by surprise, and usurped the ability to safely leave the house, let alone have school in-person.

Trends in data have shown that COVID-19 is running rampant in the 15-19 year old age group.

“All of the other age groups are starting to trend down and yet the teenagers are trending up. If you just look at what the rate of infection is for [all] people, you’re going to lose that the rate of infection for teens is exceptionally high,” Parkway Director of Health Services Robin Wallin said. “We have to get this under control so that we can come back to school.”

Due to a recent decision made at the emergency Parkway Board of Education meeting on Sept. 29, high schoolers now have the option to return back to school, or remain online. And for high school teachers, the online teaching experience has varied in ease.
Third Place: Natalie Schliekelman, Clarke Central HS, Athens, GA

“Dean’s Direction”

Judge’s Comment: A great profile helps the reader really know the subject. You come away from Natalie's profile of Latinda Dean with an appreciation of how special this educator is. Ms. Dean's dedication to students, teaching and learning come through in Natalie's writing. This journalist's work shows how greatly her subject cares.

will never change. Her students also know that I really care about them as individuals and as human beings,” Dean said. “Being patient, and having a very open and positive attitude towards students, in addition to being someone whom is well-respected as your constant same. I think it takes both, I don’t think one works without the other.”

Above: Natalie Schliekelman interviews Dean around the Clarke Central HS campus in Athens, GA.

Dean’s Direction.

Judge’s Comment: A great profile helps the reader really know the subject. You come away from Natalie's profile of Latinda Dean with an appreciation of how special this educator is. Ms. Dean's dedication to students, teaching and learning come through in Natalie's writing. This journalist's work shows how greatly her subject cares.
Category 3: Pandemic Coverage - Single Story
First Place: Emily Early, Parkway West HS, Ballwin, MO
“ABC’s of COVID”

Judge’s Comment: The journalists who wrote this article covered the pandemic in a unique way. They used the alphabet from A to Z to highlight several events that occurred as a result of the virus. N was for Netflix, Q was for quarantine and Z was for Zoom. Interesting anecdotal quotes made each event come alive visually for the readers. This style allowed readers to get an idea of several events that occurred as a result of the pandemic.

During quarantine, most made changes in their daily life and found new ways to keep themselves content at home. Read about how students made the best of it and what their experiences were.

A is for Art

Senior and Drawing club president Eva Phillips takes AP Drawing because it helps her increase her art knowledge and create unique projects. She has taken drawing classes throughout high school, and plans on majoring in illustration.

“I think drawing helps [with boredom during COVID-19], because it’s something that you can just do for hours and not realize that it’s been so long. It’s a really good way to pass time and just kind of zone out for a little bit,” Phillips said.

Phillips has been learning to draw from real-life references as well as photos.

“I think I’ve improved a lot. I always saw district art shows with the AP studio students like seniors as an eighth grader and I was like, ‘How do you ever get that good?’ but now I realize that it’s not as hard as I thought,” Phillips said.

B is for Baking with the Braziers

Acting as her parents’ second-in-command, sophomore Lydia Brazier loves to bake. She loves to help with her mom’s baking business and edit baking videos for the family YouTube channel, ‘Baking with the Braziers’.
Judge’s Comment: The author of this article did a super job of showing how the virus affected choir students as they tried to carry on class via Zoom. Readers could visualize how difficult it was to keep singers together when they weren’t in the same room.

Nothing is the same for the Shalhevet Choirhawks, who are now completely barred from singing together, unable to have even just a little of what they used to as the school’s touring, concertizing, and Chanukah-caroling co-ed Jewish a cappella group.

Since the coronavirus outbreak in March, the Firehawk choir has had to abandon the Shalhevet music room and try to sing over Zoom, due to a health prohibition directed specifically at singing because it spreads the virus faster.

This has had the effect of stopping choir almost entirely, because it can’t simply move rehearsals and concerts online. Zoom features a slight audio delay — a seemingly small problem that throws off the choir’s entire sound by preventing people from singing at exactly the same time. Tiny delays destroy the entire performance, turning what should be a sonorous blend into a meaningless cacaphony.

“The root of the problem is microscopic water droplets called “aerosols” that can carry the virus, and that a person emits when projecting their voice,” Dr. Julie Higashi, a public health expert for L.A. County and leader of Shalhevet’s Medical Task Force, said one of the earliest “super-spreader” Covid outbreaks happened at a Seattle-area choir practice last March, when 52 singers out of 61 in attendance caught Covid-19 from just one who was infected. Two died.

“The experience in Seattle ... is evidence enough that the choir is, unfortunately, an extremely high-risk activity,” Dr. Higashi wrote in an email reply to Boiling Point questions.

When whooping cough spread in Shalhevet, six people in choir got it... Singing, especially in groups, in a secluded area and even outside, spreads viruses way faster than talking because you’re using so much more energy and so much more breath.”  

— Danielle Finn, Choirhawk tenor, 11th grade

Tuberculosis and pertussis have also been spread by singing, she said.
Third Place: Alice Meng, Iowa City West HS, Iowa City, IA
“Zoomed out”

Judge’s Comment: This is a great story about how difficult it is for both teachers and students to learn by Zoom. There are great quotes like the one person who said “It’s sort of defeating, and I don’t know what’s going on behind there. “Readers had no doubt about what was going on behind there after reading this article.

It’s seventh period, but somehow you’re still sprawled in bed. Your head is throbbing and your back aches. A voice drones on from your laptop on the other side of the room. If it wasn’t for the fear that your teacher might call on you, you’d be fast asleep. This is the new reality for many online students experiencing “Zoom fatigue.”

In the first trimester, 44.7% of students enrolled in the online learning program. Those students have attended synchronous classes over Zoom for half of the school day and completed work asynchronously for the remaining portion. However, the hours spent on Zoom have added up, leaving students feeling drained.

Online student Ida Behnami ’21 has been having trouble staying engaged during Zoom classes.

“When I have my camera off, which is really tempting to do, sometimes I’ll just go off and do my own thing, or I’ll go on my phone,” Behnami said. “It’s kind of hard. The audio will disconnect from the teachers, or they’ll get kicked out [of the Zoom meeting], and so then there’ll be a disruption in the class, and then it just makes me not focus for the rest of class.”

Teachers who have opted to teach from home have noticed this lack of engagement from students. Math teacher Julie Kennebeck has struggled to connect with her students and understand their needs in a virtual setting. Since only a couple of her students turn their cameras on during class, she finds it difficult to adjust her teaching pace as needed.
Category 4: Pandemic Coverage - Series
First Place: The KHS Journalism Partnership, Kirkwood HS, Kirkwood, MO

"Nineteen Voices from COVID-19"

Judge’s Comment: The photography and writing were both superb. The user experience was so seamless on both a desktop and mobile device. It's hard to create such a visually stunning and equally easy to navigate web presentation, but this talented team did just that. I was so impressed at the wide variety of people from the community that were featured in this piece. This was a huge undertaking. Even just photographing this many people during a pandemic is a challenge but you wouldn't know it. The final product is something I'd expect to see from a major news outlet.
Second Place: Timberlines & Woodman Staff, Greenwood Community HS, Greenwood, IN
“Quarantine Magazine”

Judge’s Comment: The visuals featured in this special issue were the first thing that caught my eye, but the quality of the writing and reporting blew me away once I really dug into reading this issue. I was impressed by the wide range of topics covered -- from the impact on local businesses to the impact on student's plans. The feature on remote learning may have been the strongest. It covered all the angles: how students coped, how parents felt and how teaches adapted. It was a really in-depth look at once of the most complex issues brought on by the pandemic and I applaud the staff for how well they covered it.
Third Place: Team at FHN, Francis Howell North HS, St. Charles, MO

“Pandemic Coverage”

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Category 5:
Feature Writing
First Place: Madelynn Niles, McCallum HS, Austin, TX
“A trip down Dar Bowl’s memory lanes”

Judge’s Comment: When a beloved, almost mythical local business closes, there are great options available for reporting, from family connections to group experiences to students feeling something has been lost that can’t be found. The combination of reporting depth and terrific writing and organization made this feature stand out. The professionalism of this reporting would allow this feature to grace a local magazine or news site just as well as the school media that published it. I wish I could have visited this suddenly closed bowling alley.
Second Place: Campbell Wood, Shawnee Mission East HS, Prairie Village, KS
"New Way of Nursing"

Judge’s Comment: The way this feature on new challenges for a school nurse managed to take readers into a woman's thinking and preparation, relying on a combination of observation and insightful interviewing, made this a timely and inspirational story with a tight local angle.

New Way of Nursing: How Nurse Ptacek’s job has changed with COVID-19
By Campbell Wood
Posted November 23, 2020

Don’t overreact.

East nurse Stephanie Ptacek thought to herself as she put on her safety goggles. She crept into room 420 — the isolation room — to check up on the first student who had reported COVID-19 symptoms since hybrid learning started. It was only the first day.

She knew they were scared too. She couldn’t freak out.

If she overreacts, students won’t come to her when they feel sick. If she overreacts, she can’t help them. She has to stay calm.

"I don’t want it to be like, ‘Oh, you went to the nurse and she berated you for having COVID symptoms,’” Ptacek said. “There’s a stigma with COVID for some reason and people are secretive. I want kids to know that they can report symptoms, that they don’t need to be secretive, and we’ll take care of things.”

Looking out for the health of 2,000 students and staff members isn’t easy. Her school days have gone from kids stopping by to take their medication to sending one to two kids home daily and into a 14-day quarantine.

"It’s just surreal,” Ptacek said. “There’s no better word for it.”

When Ptacek started as a school nurse a year ago, she was anticipating the regular high school nurse job — bloody noses, sore throat, upset stomach, at worst, a broken bone. But nurses have to be prepared for anything these days, Ptacek said.

"I don’t think any healthcare workers expected to be working during a global pandemic,” Ptacek said. "I’ve had to learn a lot of new things about public health and contact tracing.”
Third Place: Emily Moser, Blue Valley Northwest HS, Overland Park, KS
“*Our Modern Religions*”

Judge’s Comment: This package of reporting on four different students and their approach to spirituality combined terrific environmental portraits with sensitive and insightful reporting. Religion and spirituality generally is undercovered and not easy to write about in accessible ways. This story handled the pressure well.
Category 6: Column Writing
Stop saying that children are resilient

Belle Wilson, Editor-in-Chief
October 12, 2020

These past few months have been tough on everyone. We are all doing the best we can to deal with situations and obstacles we’ve never faced before. I’ve noticed changes in my own mental and physical health due to the new circumstances of life.

The most human thing to do is confide in others and try to find reassurance of our feelings. It’s a natural instinct that most young people will rely on the adults in their lives to listen to the concerns they have and to give advice in regard to how they should navigate through difficult moments like these. Time and time again, young people seem to receive the same response.

“You’ll be okay; children are resilient.”

What does that even mean? By definition, it means “doing better than expected for the situation; to withstand or recover quickly.”

Basically, my interpretation of that phrase is, as a teenager, I’m going to be expected to bounce back and not let things affect me even if deep down inside they do. It reminds me of the line from the Kelly Clarkson song, “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” This may be true, but just because it didn’t kill you doesn’t mean it doesn’t make a negative impact on your life.

From the time we are first born, every moment — both good and bad — molds you into the person you will eventually grow up to be. If you think about it, it’s actually quite scary how even little moments can affect the adult you’ll become one day.

These past several months, children and young adults have not been able to simply be kids. Yes, this may be for our safety, but it doesn’t mean we don’t have the right to be upset.

First Place: Isabelle Wilson, The John Carroll School, Bel Air, MD
“Stop saying that children are resilient”

Judge’s Comment: In a year full of life-altering events, there were plenty of important stories about the impact on core audiences of scholastic media. Often adult authorities told those stories. This column stands out because it presents another perspective, expressed by students, tackling one of those events - the pandemic and its impact. Exercising leadership, authority and passion, this columnist courageously speaks truth to power in a well-written response from the perspective of her peers, who often possess little agency.
What’s in a name?

After all, as was once asked by Shakespeare’s Juliet, is a rose not a rose, if called by another name?

A bunch of us at our publication were wondering the same thing early last school year, but with a slight twist: What’s in a school’s nickname?

(Editor’s note: This is the first article in a series we are calling “What’s in a Name?,” which explores the history behind our mascot and the use of Native American imagery and nicknames. This serves as an intro to the package and explains our nearly year-long exploration of our school’s mascot, the Indians.)

The trials and tribulations in exploring our mascot

Second Place: Ellie Kim, Pascack Valley HS, Hillsdale, NJ
“What’s in a name?”

Judge’s Comment: Reflective contemplation of the mascots at this school. Leadership and information are important goals for an effective opinion column. This one admirably achieves those goals.

Ellie Kim, Editor in Chief
October 20, 2020
Allowing students to skip exams in two classes in which they have an 85 would improve grades, equity, mental health

Third Place: Jessica Montoya Moreno, McCallum HS, Austin, TX
“A good idea in any year, a finals opt-out policy is an absolute necessity for students, teachers in 2020”

Judge’s Comment: Strong argument in support of a school policy change to address the pandemic's effect on students' mental health. Effective writing and authoritative voice engage readers in what could be a complex topic.
Category 7: Review Writing
First Place: Emily Davis, Starr’s Mill HS, Fayetteville, GA

“Netflix short captures human spirit through heartbreak”

Judge’s Comment: This review is thoughtful, powerful and compelling, not unlike the film it reflects. The writer effortlessly captures the emotions that brought this monochromatic, abstract project to life. She succinctly recasts the storyline and then lets the “faceless doodles of black” show the agony of losing a loved one to a school shooting. Vivid descriptions and insightful conclusions contribute to a mature analysis, supported by an enviable command of the language. This review made me cry.

Netflix’s “If Anything Happens I Love You” bears a powerful, heart-breaking message that doesn’t require but 12 minutes to make the watcher’s stomach drop. Truthfully, it only requires a specific 70 seconds.

The film follows two mourning parents whose marriage is falling apart as they deal with the death of their daughter. As they reminisce about their daughter, they are brought together and know that they still have each other, even in the unbelievably hard times. Emphasis on “unbelievable,” because no parents would expect such a fate to be their child’s.

“If Anything Happens I Love You” was directed and written by Will McCormack, who helped write “Toy Story 4” and Michael Govier. One of the main reasons why this short film has had the impact that it does is because of all of the outside sources that contributed to making this ink-animated, silent, and musically-driven piece of art.

Both directors made the decision to meet with the organization Everytown for Gun Safety and with parents of gun violence victims in order to make the film emotionally realistic. One aspect to this grief that I’ve personally never considered is the effect that the loss of a child can have on the parents’ marriage.

Throughout the film the parents and their ink-drawn shadows yell at one another, showing that tragedy can cause lots of misplaced frustration when such an event is out of one’s control.

Despite the monochrome of the parents’ world, there are traces of color left behind by their daughter. In one scene, the mother sits on her child’s bed, smelling one of her daughter’s shirts, while a soccer ball bumps into a vinyl. The music adds color, while an ink shadow of the daughter is introduced.

This music also catches the father’s attention. He enters the room and joins the mother on the bed. While they’re both still sad, but provide weak smiles, flashbacks begin as they revisit memories of their daughter.
Second Place: Campbell Wood, Shawnee Mission East HS, Prairie Village, KS
“Reconnecting Face-to-Face”

Judge’s Comment: A courageous, insightful take on moving away from the synthetic nature of 21st-century human interaction, with a hilarious conclusion.

Reconnecting Face-to-Face: How an 80-year-old book on human interaction is still applicable today

By Campbell Wood
Posted March 11, 2020

“What’s this supposed to mean?” was my first thought after my dad handed me the book “How to Win Friends and Influence People.” Was he trying to tell me something?

Whether he was implying I needed to make more friends or not, I eventually realized I needed this book — we all need it.

Dale Carnegie’s “How to Win Friends and Influence People” is the ultimate self-help book, and — unlike a slew of other options in the genre — does exactly what the title entails. But what makes this book stand out on the self-help shelf isn’t just its principles, but the fact that Carnegie wrote them over 80 years ago and they’re still applicable today.

The purpose of the book is to highlight the benefits personal interaction can have on your life. Almost a century later, and Carnegie’s teachings have found their way to my hands as I work to achieve that more approachable and compassionate personality.

One thing Carnegie emphasizes is face-to-face interaction — I learned the best way to start a conversation with someone is to ask about their interests. And to my experimentation, my English class small talk improved with my newly-found people skills.

His voice-packed writing style and well-rounded knowledge of human interaction makes his preachings more memorable than one would think, especially in a book genre where the climax finds itself in the phrase, “how to be a better you.”

Although today’s interactions are heavily dictated by technology, and Carnegie lived in a time when phones were anything but “smart,” his interpretation of interaction is still applicable today despite the technological advancements since it was published.

Though he had no knowledge of what was to come, Carnegie proves that interaction isn’t commenting on someone’s spring break post or “friendling” someone on Snapchat, but rather...
Third Place: Hugh Chan, Ladue Horton Watkins HS, St. Louis, MO

“How the cookies crumble”

Judge’s Comment: Author backs up his assertions with descriptions that are thorough and nuanced, occasionally treading into TMI territory. Masterful deployment of the semicolon. An especially adroit and spot-on analysis of S’mores.
Category 8: In-Depth Reporting/Individual
First Place: Alexandra Rozmarin, University Preparatory Academy, San Jose, CA

“My Own Worst Enemy”

Judge’s Comment: "My Own Worst Enemy" digs deep into a serious problem with well told, real life stories that illustrate the links between addictive attention to self-worth and anorexia. People interviewed for the story are well informed and interesting. But, the story goes beyond just anecdotes and delivers with data and additional reporting from experts who can put this problem in context. A lot or reporting and writing are evident in this piece. It is that extra effort to get meaningful information that pushes this story by Alexandra Rozmarin to the top for individual in-depth reporting.
Learning together: district commits to cultural responsiveness after controversial online learning assignment

Kylie Clifton, Feature Editor | October 2, 2020

It was 9:15 on the morning of September 23rd, and eighth grade Portage North Middle School student Pablo Fraga was ready to return to a new kind of normal with his online history assignment. The content that awaited him, however, was anything but.

“I read the questions through and they disgusted me,” he said.

Many students have been frustrated in the online learning environment, but Pablo’s disgust was unrelated to technological hurdles: he was deeply bothered by what the assignment meant and what it asked him and what it asked 14 year old students like him to do.

The assignment, which was given to all eighth grade students in the district as a part of the Learning Together initiative to continue learning through the end of the school year, featured numerous charts and records of slaves, including their name, age, definition of their forced labor, their monetary “value” in 1848, and their adjusted “value” in modern times.

After students read the table, they were asked to answer a series of questions, such as:

“Looking at the inventory above, which slave definition seems to be worth the most money? Why do you think this is?”

“Mr. Roman had 20 total house slaves, How much money in 1848 did Mr. Roman had wrapped up into his slaves?”

“Looking at the amount that one individual had tied into slavery (just in people, not in profit or anything else), does it make sense why the South was so intent on keeping the plantation

Judge’s Comment: A lot of detail, including verbatim emails, show up in this story that would make news far beyond the school. It was a tough story to write because of the controversy and emotion surrounding it but needed to be written. Writer Kylie Clifton’s lead anecdote draws you in and the writing captures the story's essence, touching the necessary bases when sourcing and exploring multiple angles. Comment from the teacher who made the assignment and pressing school officials further about the wisdom of their stated reason for the assignment could have deepened the story's appeal. But, 2nd place is a high achievement. Job well done.
Third Place: Ava Smith, Henry W. Grady HS, Atlanta, GA

“Recommended new school name spurs backlash”

Judge’s Comment: The writer, Ava Smith, did a good job of untangling a complicated story and giving all of those with a stake in the story a chance to have their say. The lead was good, letting us know the issue right away and setting the stage for the comments to follow. The story had good detail and conveyed the emotion that drove the speakers. Good entry.
Category 9: In-Depth Reporting/Team
“Miscommunication about district move to hybrid causes concerns and confusion among shareholders”

Judge’s Comment: This team has clearly earned the trust of its readers and community, which is evident from the sources they were able to get on the record for this story, about the controversy around a miscommunicated move to hybrid schooling. The writing and structuring of the story is really compelling, which demonstrates keen editing, and the visuals provided valuable information to the reader and supplemented the text well. This story is an exceptional example of student journalists holding institutions accountable while responsibly presenting various perspectives on a difficult issue.
First Place: Melissa Liu, Bedansh Pandey, Northview HS, Johns Creek, GA

“Restoring the Creek”

Judge’s Comment: Melissa and Bedansh did a phenomenal job of localizing a huge issue (climate change) to their school community. They covered the topic from various angles and interviewed a diverse roster of sources, from a city councilperson to a student who manages a boba tea shop, but kept the story threaded cohesively. This is professional-quality journalism, written well and clearly conceived, edited, and structured thoughtfully.
First Place: Emma Lingo, Maddie Meyers, Malcia Greene, Kiden-Aloyse Smith, Rachel Finan, Charlotte Heinrich, Kirkwood, HS, Kirkwood, MO
“The 1619 Project”

Judge’s Comment: This group of students took a massive issue -- the original sin of chattel slavery and all of its heinous consequences and impacts -- and translated it to their school community through a compelling, thoughtful mix of reported and opinion pieces. Through stellar reporting, these student journalists put human faces on the achievement gap, redlining, and more, and pulled in historical context and current day issues to create a narrative of the scars of slavery and the fresh wounds still being inflicted by racism. This package was thoughtfully and maturely conceived and presented.
Category 10: Sports Feature Writing
First Place: Sam Hawkins, Carmel HS, Carmel, IN
“(Fem)powered”

Judge’s Comment: This piece flowed incredibly well. Great description in the lede, well-researched overall. Goes in-depth, but not so far where it loses readers. A well-written, informative read that does a wonderful job highlighting women in a predominantly male sport. If you're looking for a one-stop-shop piece on women in martial arts, this is it.
Everyone only has one brain, and protecting that brain can be a challenge. According to a study published in the journal Pediatrics, football is the sport with the highest concussion rates followed by girls soccer and boys ice hockey.

Nathan Bradford ‘23 has had three concussions from playing football—one each year from seventh grade to ninth grade. After his first two concussions, Bradford took about a week off from playing football before returning to the game he loved.

“I had a lot of people pushing me to [continue playing]. I enjoyed the game a lot, and I was getting better,” Bradford said.

However, after suffering from another concussion the following year, Bradford decided to stop playing football at the end of the season.

“It was a tough decision, but I valued my own brain over the game that I was playing,” Bradford said. “Playing this year would just not be worth the risk.”

A concussion is generally started by a blow to the head or whiplash that creates a bruise in the brain. That leads to swelling, and since the brain is contained within the skull, there is nowhere for the swelling to go, and the resulting pressure affects the brain. Symptoms can include trouble concentrating, feeling off-balance, blurry vision, seeing double, sensitivity to light, neck pain, fatigue, and trouble remembering things.

The Director of Primary Sports Medicine at the University of Iowa, Andrew Peterson, is also the head team physician of the Iowa Hawkeyes. He goes to football games with the Iowa Hawkeyes so that he can be ready to intervene if a player gets a concussion.

The main tool used to identify concussions is the SCAT 5, the fifth version of the Sideline Concussion Assessment Tool. It is included in an international consensus statement on concussion evaluation and management.

“Pretty much everyone uses [the SCAT 5] as their sideline concussion tool,” Peterson said. “It involves the symptom scores, balance test, some memory and concentration tests. You use that to really fully evaluate [if someone has a concussion].”

Concussion diagnosis is largely based on the symptoms of the athlete, and how they act during the testing. In the fall 2019 football session alone, the City High football team had 12 diagnosed concussions. The coaches are very aware of this issue and have measures in place to deal with both the risk of concussions and their treatment.

Second Place: Julianne Berry-Stoelzle, Iowa City HS, Iowa City, IA
“A Heads Up on Concussions”

Judge’s Comment: Berry-Stoelzle does an excellent job breaking down a nationally-debated topic and localizing it. Can easily tell this piece was well-researched. Sources are key to a story, and Berry-Stoelzle picked a great group, from those who’ve suffered from concussions to experts in the medical field. Story flowed incredibly well and really made readers think, as all quality reporting should.
The nerves were intense as Shiloh Wilson tried to regroup after being bucked off his first horse in the biggest rodeo competition of his short career. A moment before the 7-year-old got on his second horse, his dad thumped him on the chest.

"Son, you got this," Jeff Wilson said. "I told you, you got this. Now get on this horse and ride this horse."

Shiloh stayed on his second horse long enough to be taken off of it by the "pickup man." His smile, his dad said, was priceless.

It is a smile of a third-generation cowboy. A smile that can be donned only by a grandson of a Texas rodeo Hall of Famer. It's a smile Shiloh's dad and grandfather both flashed during their championship rodeo careers.

"I'm leaving a legacy behind me," Shiloh's 87-year-old grandfather Stanley Wilson said. "I'm just all around proud."

"I really enjoy watching Shiloh ride. He's so young, he's just thrilled to death with it."

Collision and refinishing teacher Jeff Wilson began training Shiloh for rodeos when Shiloh was 3. The passion for rodeoing is three generations in the making for the Wilson family.

Stanley Wilson competed in rodeos for about 22 years. Jeff followed in his footsteps.

Jeff started riding steers when he was around 8 or 9. He then rode bulls until he took a three-year break to focus on college and his teaching career. He put rodeo on the back burner until he ran into a friend who was riding saddle bronc horses.

"I watched him ride that bucking horse and I went with him to a couple more rodeos," Jeff said. "And I went, 'I want to try that.'"

In 1995, Jeff started riding saddle bronc horses. At 28, he won rookie of the year, and at 33, he won a world class championship.

He taught during the week. Then when the bell rang at 3:30 p.m. on Fridays, he traveled to wherever his rodeo was that weekend.

Finally in 2004 at the age of 35, Jeff Wilson was ready to retire. He had fulfilled everything he possibly could in the rodeo world. He couldn’t get any better, and it just wasn’t as exciting or fun as it used to be.

**Third Place: Kathleen Ortiz, Kingwood Park HS, Kingwood, TX**

"Like Father, Like Son"

Judge’s Comment: Writing about sports outside the "big three" of baseball, football, basketball can be difficult, but often times that's where some of the best stories come from. Ortiz's story is exactly that -- a great look into a family's passion for rodeo. Ortiz does a great job articulating how much the sport means to the family. There's plenty of passion in each quote and she does an excellent job weaving through the family's past and present. A well-written, fun read.
Category 11: Sports Game/Event Coverage
First Place: Thomas Melina Raab, McCallum HS, Austin, TX
“Riley sets personal record at state cross-country meet”

Judge’s Comment: Thomas tells the story well of a runner's journey back to the state cross-country meet by taking the reader through his past and how he improved upon previous times. The writing is concise and clear, with the quotes adding depth into the reporting.

At 3:15 on a cool Monday afternoon, the gun went off and the runners scrambled to get good placement for the first mile. Riley went out very fast, finishing his first mile at 4:50, and reaching a personal goal to run a sub-5-minute split. As the race went on, splits got slower and people started to die out, but he was able to push himself and keep a steady pace throughout.

He came through the finish line in 55th place, an underwhelming number until you hear his time, a personal best 16:14.71.

“I’m happy with how I did,” Riley said. “It was one of my best times of the year, and I think I did really well. It was a good way to end the season.”

Riley has many reasons to be proud of his performance at this meet, and so does his Coach.

“Riley is by far the fastest and strongest runner McCallum has had in the last 15 years since I have been coaching,” Coach Ashton said. “He was feeling healthy and strong heading into the race this year. He was very pleased with his race and finish.”

Riley had a great race, but it’s just a milestone not a crowning achievement. Track season starts in the spring, and from there he expects bigger and better things when cross-country starts again in the fall of 2021.

It’s more than likely that he will run again at the end of the year at this same course, and chances are just as high that he could be one of those runners leading the way at the front of the pack.

After all, three is the magic number.
Second Place: Spencer Goldstein, Pascack Valley HS, Hillsdale, NJ
“Valley conquered by Ramapo in season opener”

Judge’s Comment: Spencer's recap featured a strong storyline of the changes in the team from the previous year and why they lost the way they did. The writing featured a good balance between specific plays and led in well to game and season statistics.
Third Place: Abigail Carter, Starr’s Mill HS, Fayetteville, GA
“It’s a new day”

Judge’s Comment: Abigail's writing in this story was incredible, and she painted a good picture of the action during the game. The lede really pushed the narrative that there was a shot at redemption and the team fulfilled that goal with commanding performances.

We just had to play our game, and it was just a new day, just reset and start over,” junior Sydney Blair said.

Thanks to the pitching of junior Lilli Backes, and the hitting and base running at the top of the Lady Panther batting order, redemption was at hand as Starr’s Mill traveled to Whitewater for the Region 2-AAAAA championship series.

In the first game, Backes faced 24 batters in seven innings, striking out 14 batters, and only giving up two hits. The only run Whitewater scored was on a passed ball in the third. Senior Jolie Lester went 3-for-4 with two singles, a triple, and two RBIs. Junior Julia Cliff went 2-for-3 with two singles, and a stolen base.

“I think the girls feed off of [Backes], and how she’s feeling and how she starts the game,” head coach Mark Williamson said.

The Lady Panthers started off strong in the top of the first. Flanders led off with a double, then stole third base while junior Sydney Blair was at bat. Lester’s single brought in Flanders, giving Starr’s Mill a quick 1-0 lead.

The top of the second saw junior Kalin Blinstrub hitting a single, then advancing to second on a throwing error. Cliff bunted, sending Blinstrub to 3rd. In the next at bat, junior Sarah Latham’s hit scored Blinstrub. The Lady Panthers took a 2-0 lead into the bottom of the second, where Backes notched two more strikeouts.

In the bottom of the third Whitewater started getting footing with junior Dylan Bronkhorst’s single. Senior Kyna Cheney’s groundout allowed Bronkhorst to advance to second. Bronkhorst then stole third, and scored the only Whitewater run on a passed ball. The inning ended with Starr’s Mill leading 2-1.

Junior Lilli Backes delivers a pitch. In her last three games, Backes has struck out 34 opposing batters. Just two weeks ago the team was toward the bottom in region standings. They have now won seven of their last nine games heading into the state playoffs. (Anika Pepper)
Category 12: Profile Writing
Dave Geeting had a way with words. When he entered a party, he'd let everyone know he had arrived. He was convinced that his Tame Impala songs were superior to his daughters' love of Taylor Swift and Selena Gomez. And he could write a hell of a review for The Riverfront Times in his spare time.

Without Dave, no one knew what to say.

“When it happened to me, and all my friends weren't even in 8th grade yet,” Allison Geeting, junior and Dave's eldest daughter, said. “It's hard for [my friends] because they don't know what to say.”

“Experiencing such a hard, traumatic event in my life has definitely made me have to grow up a lot quicker than most people especially because now we only have one parent so if my mom's not around I have to step up and be a co-parent in our house.”

Allison and her two younger sisters, Caroline, freshman, and Jane, 6th grader at North Kirkwood Middle School (NKMS), lost their dad July 23, 2016. Dave committed suicide after a lifelong struggle with chronic depression.

“We found out after a family friend trip to Lake St. Louis,” Caroline said. “It was shocking. When you’re that young you never picture someone so close to you dying.”

Dave was born and raised in Kirkwood. He traveled from Keysor Elementary to NKMS to KHS, where he wrote for The Call, played on the basketball team and even had a license plate with his nickname, “Geeter.” He then went to the University of Missouri, where he met his future wife, Julie Jones.

“Since he did go to Kirkwood, it’s hard because I know there are teachers who he had and classes that he took that I want to ask him about, but obviously I can’t,” Allison said. “There [have been] a couple [of] times an older substitute teacher who retired will come and they'll see Geeting and they'll say ‘Oh, I had some of your relatives.’ They'll say, ‘Which Geeting are you from, who's your parent?’ and sometimes they don’t know he passed away.”

First Place: Charlotte Heinrich, Kirkwood HS, Kirkwood, MO

“Dave and his daughters”

Judge’s Comment: Emotion. Emotion made this the strongest profile of the lot. It hurt, it made me smile, it gave me hope. This was what good profiling should be--an experience that leaves the reader feeling. Thank you for the heart and maturity.
Second Place: Morgan Reese, Prosper HS, Prosper, TX

“Talonette takes a knee to ‘take a stand’ in National Anthem”

Judge’s Comment: This profile gave a face to a movement and utilized a variety of multimedia to enhance the story. Not only was Reese's profile thoughtful and eloquent, it showed purpose and drive that student publications often miss. This topic is also absolutely difficult to cover and you did it with finesse. One piece that stood out was the use of a comment, which could have been done without care, but something so simple added so much to your story and it showed the maturity of your writing.
Third Place: Andrew Robinson, Clarke Central HS, Athens, GA
“Grand Slam Cam”

Judge’s Comment: The beauty of this profile is in the whole package that was created. Not only was a picture of Cam painted eloquently, the visual dynamics added to the strength of the piece. I left the story with a feel-good sense of community and the reality of the person that is Cam Stokes.

"The church I (currently) go to is Miracle House in Bogart, Georgia. It impacted me a lot because there were a lot of male role models that I looked up to. I didn't really have my dad, so they took me in and gave me little tips and things about what to do and what not to do. They just led me down the right road," Cameron said.

Seeing his mother work hard to support his family inspired Cameron to work harder on his own. He applied this inspiration by working hard while playing his two favorite sports: basketball and baseball.

"I've always liked basketball. I think I started when I was about five or six. I started (playing) at a church called Beech Haven. Ever since then, I just fell in love with it," Cameron said.
Category 13: Political Writing
First Place: Ella West,
St. John’s School,
Houston, TX
“Congressional campaign pits Mavericks
Fletcher, Hunt”

Judge’s Comment: This story is a great example of original reporting about politics more likely to affect people's lives -- on the local level. Moreover, the story has a great angle for student, faculty and general public readers because it is about opposing political candidates from the school the newspaper covers. Good quotes, with a blend of the serious when it comes to policies and curious when it comes to be alums of the same school. Great job.

"When you are in a position like that, you have to be very cautious and judicious with what you do because your life and other people’s lives are on the line. That experience is similar to what running for office is like."
— Wesley Hunt, (’00)

Hunt (’00) is a newcomer to politics who won the Republican primary outright in March. A West Point graduate, he spent eight years in the Army as an Aviation Branch Officer. He touts his military experience as preparation for seeking elected office.

“I have been engaged by the enemy, and I have had to engage the enemy with lethal force as well,” Hunt said in a phone interview. “When you are in a position like that, you have to be very cautious and judicious with what you do because your life and other people’s lives are on the line. That experience is similar to what running for office is like.”

Fletcher has campaigned against other SJS alums before. She won the 2018 Democratic primary against a crowded field that included Alex Triantaphyllis (’02) in the first round and Laura Moser (’95) in the runoff.

“The number of St. John’s students involved in politics really speaks to the engagement of the students and the emphasis on service that was such an important part of our time at St John’s,” Fletcher said.

Hunt agrees that having two alums running in the same district is a reflection on St. John’s.

“It just goes to show that [St. John’s] is a very special place because you have two people running for Congress from the same high school that come from very different backgrounds. Yet here we are, from the same high school, running for the same seat, but from different parties,” Hunt said. “St. John’s [teaches you] how to think, not what to think.”

Including Fletcher, three members of her Washington D.C. team are SJS alums: Chief of Staff Sarah Kaplan Feinmann (’07) and Senior Legislative Assistant Cameron Hull (’14).

“We have the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s covered,” Fletcher said. “I’m really proud of what our team has done during my first term in office.”
Second Place: George Lekowicz, Henry W. Grady HS, Atlanta, GA
“State politics through the eyes of Georgia’s reporters”

Judge’s Comment: The strength of those placing in the top three of this contest has been original reporting. This entry delivered with an interesting twist: revealing how local, professional journalists dealt with Georgia’s attention-grabbing 2020 elections. It was a good angle and was covered well, with a variety of sources and interesting anecdotes about covering a regular local beat amid a swoop of national media.

When Greg Bluestein answered the phone for an interview on Dec. 3, he was speeding to Savannah.

Continuously interrupted by trucker horns and turn signals on his five-hour voyage to cover Vice President Mike Pence stump for Republicans, Bluestein, the Atlanta Journal Constitution’s (AJC) senior political reporter, described 2020 Georgia election coverage with one word: non-stop.

“It’s fast and furious, and you’ve got to be nimble,” Bluestein said. “There is always something happening right now.”

During the 2020 presidential election, Georgia captured the nation’s attention as a historically red state turned blue, casting its 16 electoral votes for President-Elect Biden. But for Georgia’s political press core, the presidential race was only half the story.

Georgia is in the media’s spotlight again as the state’s two U.S. Senate seats head to run-off elections on Jan. 5. These two races, a special election between appointed Republican Senator Kelly Loeffler and Democrat Reverend Raphael Warnock, along with a regularly scheduled election between first-term Republican Senator David Perdue and Democrat Jon Ossoff will decide the balance of power in Washington.

The combination of these events transformed the Peach State from a political afterthought into the center of the political universe, creating a political journalist’s perfect storm. And while Georgia’s sudden place in the political limelight changes the state’s political landscape, it doesn’t change how local reporters do their job.

“With our team at the AJC, we are kind of doing what we always do,” Bluestein said. “We are covering hearings, we are writing about what’s happening, we are doing a daily newsletter, we are keeping the blog full of juicy developments. It’s always what we have done as reporters; it’s just now a broader audience outside of Georgia is scrutinizing it because there is so much at stake with these elections.”
Third Place: Ananya Kulkarni, Conestoga HS, Berwyn, PA
“Biden Wins Presidency”

Judge’s Comment: The real story here is defined by the subhead: "Polarization sweeps through 'Stoga student body." This story does a good job of showing how political polarization nationally plays out at the local school. The story has good, original reporting with solid sourcing that gives attention to multiple voices. Thoughtful localization of a national trend. Well done.
Category 14: Health, Science & Agriculture Writing
From Soccer Glory to Fight for Life

The day before, Kate was playing soccer in front of more than 100 college coaches in South Carolina. She scored two goals during her team’s three games at a national showcase event from Dec. 6-8 and flew back to Houston late Sunday night.

Kate got home around 2 a.m. on Dec. 9. That same day she went through her regular school day, including soccer practice until 4 p.m. That’s when she noticed her heart was beating fast.

She wasn’t concerned. She was almost amused that it felt as though her heart were beating out of her chest. It became less of a novelty when it happened a few more times soon after.

Kate’s mom Laura Tiedtke called her pediatrician. Considering the circumstances - three soccer games, a plane flight and little sleep over the weekend – the doctor said Kate was probably just dehydrated. She suggested Gatorade and food.

After picking up Culver’s and some Gatorade, Kate mentioned how tired she was to her mom as she headed to her room to start homework.

Kate was still working on Algebra 2 when Laura went into her room and dropped off a pile of clothes. At that moment, Kate placed her homework down and then began to seize.

The 15-year-old was in cardiac arrest.

Kate’s body went stiff. Her skin turned gray. Her eyes were half closed. She wasn’t responding to her mom.

First Place: Kathleen Ortiz, Kingwood Park HS, Kingwood, TX
“In a Heartbeat”

Judge’s Comment: Kathleen delivers a riveting story of a high-achieving student-athlete's survival after a sudden cardiac event. I was hooked from the opening paragraphs - short, emotion-packed sentences that told so much yet made me want to read more. Excellent decision to tell this story chronologically and sourced by her family. I felt like I was living this event with them.
Second Place: Leah Tan, Carmel HS, Carmel, IN
“Future of Farming”

Judge’s Comment: Great job localizing a global event, World Agriculture Day, with a story sourced by students and a teacher well-versed in ag. I appreciate the statistics from USDA, a reputable source.
A limited number of Austin ISD teachers and staff began their spring semester with a COVID-19 vaccine shot in the arm. The first round of vaccine distributions for the district’s teachers came about through a partnership between AISD and Ascension Seton.

Dr. Jason Reichenberg, the president of Ascension Medical Group at Ascension Texas, told The Shield in an exclusive interview that after receiving both Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine doses from the State of Texas, Ascension Seton first vaccinated their frontline caregivers, such as ICU doctors, nurses and certified nursing assistants.

“Ascension Seton took extra steps to ensure these frontline staff had access to the vaccine, and worked to eliminate social and economic barriers to ensure that our staff who are most at risk could receive the vaccine as a prioritized group,” Reichenberg said.

Alongside the vaccination of their frontline workers, Ascension Seton began a partnership with Austin ISD and Round Rock ISD to begin the vaccination of teachers who qualify under phase 1B of the Texas Health and Human Services COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan. Phase 1B includes persons over 65 and those with underlying medical conditions.

“Ascension Seton has a longstanding partnership with Austin ISD in which Ascension Seton nurses and health-care staff have provided health services in Austin ISD schools for more than 24 years,” Reichenberg said.

Third Place: Alysa Spiro, McCallum HS, Austin, TX

“At-risk teachers get New Year’s shot in the arm”

Judge’s Comment: The Covid-19 pandemic is an obvious health issue to cover, and this story on the first vaccinations of at-risk teachers taught me a lot about how one school district handled a process that is confusing and inconsistent nationwide.
Category 15: Climate & Environment Writing
First Place: Julianne Berry-Stoelzle, Iowa City HS, Iowa City, IA
“The Depths of Water Pollution”

Judge’s Comment: An unflinching look at the impact of human pollution on our watershed. Authors found the perfect protagonist in Professor Secchi, and their interviews with fellow students also enlighten. Ultimately, the solution lies at the policy level, a conclusion the story arrives at with persuasive power.

“The first step is to admit that the problem is there. If you don’t think that there is a problem, you don’t think that we need to solve it.”
— Secchi

High levels of nutrients in the water can alter the pH levels, killing off the fish population, as well as enabling algae blooms to form.

“To be honest, I really don’t know if anything is being done. I mean, I’m not saying that nothing is, I’m just not made aware of it, necessarily,” Emma Nugent ’21 said.

Nugent realizes this unawareness may be a problem.

“I mean the lack of awareness can make it worse because then it’s no one’s doing anything. You’re not worrying about it, but that doesn’t mean like the problem itself isn’t getting worse,” Nugent said.

Both Secchi and Nugent agree that the pollution in Iowa’s watersways should be discussed more than it currently is.

“The first step is to admit that the problem is there,” Secchi said. “I think the most important aspect of my work actually is to make sure that we’re all aware that there is a problem because if you don’t think that there is a problem, you don’t think that we need to solve it.”

According to Secchi, this winter had an abnormally high amount of nutrients in Iowa’s watersways, which is worrisome because generally, the great flow of nutrients happens in the spring. The nutrients in the water enable algae blooms to grow.

“The problems with algae blooms is not just that they mess up the water,” Secchi said. “They affect fish populations, and they can generate bacteria that are poisonous to humans and pets. So then the water really becomes a hazard.”

Through her work, Secchi has noticed that changing weather patterns related to climate change intensify the issue of pollution. The warmer weather along with the excess nutrients creates the ideal environment for algae growth while rising sea levels increase the potential damage of a flood.
Second Place: Archit Kalra, Carmel HS, Carmel, IN
“Climate Conundrum”

Judge’s Comment: This story deftly explores the complicated intersection of COVID and the climate crisis. A focus on youth agency makes this story dramatically relevant not only to student readers, but to teachers, parents and policy makers as well. This excellent read is aided by graphics that underscore the themes.
Third Place: Emily Rutledge, Bryant HS, Bryant, AR
“Raging Fires Persist in Australia”

Judge’s Comment: This hard-hitting story impresses for numerous reasons. Despite Arkansas being so distant from Australia, the author brings immediacy to the issue. Interviews with experts deepen our understanding of fire’s impacts on animals and habitats. The author also gets the local take, interviewing fellow classmates, plus providing opportunities to donate to the cause.

As the southern areas of Australia continue to burn, an estimated one billion animals and their habitats have perished.

It may be considered normal for bushfires to be seen in Australia; however, the fires present in recent months display a far greater extent of damage as the raging fires have killed off fauna, destroyed habitats and razed feral animals and predators, all with no end in sight. Current fires are considered some of the worst since the 2009 “Black Saturday” fires in Victoria, Australia.

Ecologist and Charles Darwin University professor Sam Banks resides in Darwin, Australia, where he studies Molecular Ecology and Conservation Biology. Prior to joining the university, Banks worked in Canberra at the Australian National University and researched forest management and fire and their impacts on Australia’s biodiversity. His research has shown the primary causes of the great number in fauna deaths aside from the fires themselves.

“Based on previous fires, we know that a lot of animals can be killed by the fire event itself,” Banks said in an interview with Prospective. “But it is often the post-fire environment, where food is scarce and the lack of shelter makes animals susceptible to predators, that is particularly challenging for animals in fire-affected environments.”

Already endangered species, including the long-footed potoroo, brush-tailed rock-wallaby and Kangaroo Island dunnart are steadily decreasing in numbers and face problems of predators and loss of habitats.

“They have all, or nearly all, of their habitat within the area of these recent fires,” Banks said. “These fires probably won’t cause their extinction, but they will be more susceptible to introduced predators like cats and foxes after the fires. High-quality habitat for the long-footed potoroo and other animals that prefer old growth forest as their habitat will become rarer if this kind of fire event becomes more common, which is what is predicted under climate change and what we are beginning to see.”

Specializing in Zoology, Evolutionary Biology and Physiological Ecology, California State University researcher Anna Doty understands the significant impact on Australia’s wildlife. While all animals are at risk, some face greater threats than others.
Visuals/Photo Categories

- News Feature
- Sports Action
- Sports Reaction
- Photo Illustration
- Photo Slideshow
- Profile Portrait
Category 16:
News Feature
Photography
First Place: Alex Melton, 
Bryant HS, 
Bryant, AR
“Joy on His Face”

Judge’s Comment: Alex captured a great moment in this photo - I can feel the energy and keep coming back to this one. It happened in a split-second, and the photographer was in the right place and ready to go. A thorough caption adds to the understanding of the image. While a tighter crop and shallower depth of field would have been preferred, the difficulty in capturing this photo elevated it to first place.
Second Place: Abigail Weihe, Bryant HS, Bryant, AR “Between Metal Bars”

Judge’s Comment: Abigail's image shows an understanding of exposure and framing with nice use of leading lines. Seeing the student's eyes through the mask is an important element. Try a slower shutter speed to blur the sparks.
Third Place: Alex Melton, Bryant HS, Bryant, AR
“Crowd Surfing”

Judge’s Comment: This is fantastic - captures a great moment and I can feel the energy. Good crop on the layout.
Category 17: Sports Action Photography
First Place: Bella Russo, McCallum HS, Austin, TX
“Gella, Yes!”

Judge’s Comment: Great action shot. This picture has so much working for it. It is sharp, exposed perfectly, and one of the better volleyball action shots I have seen. I would be extremely happy with this picture so you should be too. A definite keeper. I also like that the main subject is clearly wearing their face mask, which really shows how sports have adapted to the world we are in today.
Second Place: Caleb Melville, McCallum HS, Austin, TX
“Junior Wyatt Cunningham guards a Mustang receiver”

Judge’s Comment: Right place at the right time. Just like the winning picture, I would be extremely happy with this picture so you should be too. My only issue with this picture is that it is really dark. I tend to like pictures on the darker side, but this may be too dark. I understand the lighting conditions at high school stadiums may not be the best, but you can always increase your ISO to ensure that you are able to capture the action or try brightening the image in Photoshop.
Third Place: Mia Paladino, Nixa HS, Nixa, MO
“Swim under water”

Judge’s Comment: Here, the photographer took the time to set up an underwater remote camera to give the viewer a different look of a usually mundane event. The picture is really good, but a few things work against it in this case. Not to take away from the amount of work that went into the set up, but I wish a few more things came together to make a better composed image. Overall the image was still quite impressive.
First Place: Jennifer Xia,  
Northview HS,  
Johns Creek, GA  
“Volleyball “Advances”

Judge’s Comment: A lot of emotion going on here, which I really like. A definite keeper. The photographer was in the right place at the right time to get the entire team celebrating on the court. The viewer can tell just by looking at this picture what is going on and that is an important part of our jobs— to tell the story. The photographer also executed the photo nearly perfectly. My only piece of advice is that I wish the photographer was a bit to one side to clean the image up a bit more in the background, which may have been out of the photographer's control due to the allowed access. Backgrounds are always important, and we need to keep that in mind.
Second Place: Caleb Melville, McCallum HS, Austin, TX
“Leaps and downs”

Judge’s Comment: Great moment and something different. I like the fact that the player is celebrating with the coach, which is something we don’t always see. I think it is great to see that the players have such a strong relationship with their coaches/mentors. I just wish the photo was a bit cleaner. There is a lot going on in this image, which I like, but some of the players in the background are a bit too distracting. Sometimes things go your way, sometimes they don’t. I also wish the photo was a bit brighter.
Second Place: Rachel Sarff, Blue Valley Northwest HS, Overland Park, KS
“Hands-off”

Judge’s Comment: I like this photo because it is different, and the photographer followed the player and came up with something interesting, which is always part of the goal. Here I am guessing the photographer followed this particular player and made a mundane photo more interesting by staying with them through the play. Sometimes these nuances and differences make what could be a boring photo become something more interesting. Well done.
Category 19: Photo Illustration
First Place: Sarah Golder, Shawnee Mission East HS, Overland Park, KS
“The Faults of Standardized Testing”

Judge’s Comment: Sarah's image shows both creative conceptualization of the story as well as skill in image manipulation, and this entry is the best representation of an editorial photo illustration among the group. The theme - financial stress related to standardized testing - is immediately clear, without being overly complicated. The use of grayscale and monochromatic green work well to draw attention to key areas of the photo.
Second Place: Nora Hosic, North Kansas City HS, North Kansas City, KS
“The Photo Story of My Summer”

Judge’s Comment: Nora's illustration is a creative approach to a tricky topic to visualize. The student put thought into the layout of the items, including the use of the cords as a visual frame. It is at once universal and unique to the artist's experience.
Third Place: Mitri Krishna, Blue Valley Northwest HS, Overland Park, KS
“Our Modern Religions”

Judge’s Comment: With the challenges of covid and social distancing, this was a creative way to approach a group portrait. When building a multiple exposure, consider matching the opacity of all subjects — this feels focused on the Jewish student and minimizes the others.
Category 20: Photo Slideshow
First Place: Nayeli Brewster, Ria Pandey, Kyla Ulug, Haylie Yee and Tyler Yuen, University Preparatory Academy, San Jose, CA

“We are very connected at heart’: Reporters document quarantine through photos”

Judge’s Comment: The black and white treatment of the images helped this presentation stand apart from others with similar themes. The editing of the show was skillfully tight which helped take the viewer through a wide range of emotions many people experienced in the Covid-19 pandemic - from isolated but happy family gatherings, quiet moments of reflection and lonely landscapes. Even though the selection of images was small, that made the presentation more powerful. The images are technically sound, well-exposed and sharp. There were unusual angles and compositions. A strong group of photos.
Second Place: Paulina Solorzano, Whitney HS, Rocklin, CA
“Preparing for ‘High School Musical’ opening night, students rehearse during Tech Week”

Judge’s Comment: In such an unusual year, it was comforting to see scenes from regular high school life even if they were captured from a theater production. The photographer did a wonderful job of finding emotional expressions given by the actors, interesting compositions, and beautifully-lit stage sets. Everything is well exposed and the focus is sharp on all images. The editing of the images is tight and the amount of photos included in the slideshow was just right for the subject. Well done!
Third Place: **McCallum Staff,**
McCallum HS,
Austin, TX

“Stay-home order creates chances to bond”

Judge’s Comment: The staff of photographers did a great job of pulling together their experiences during Covid-19 pandemic quarantines and sharing them with the world. So many interesting events and perspectives were captured - from socially-distanced gatherings, closeups of empty calendars and board games, and action-filled family interactions. The broad range of emotions many people experienced in 2020 were well represented. There were just a few images that weren’t quite to the technical standards of some of the others in the presentation (some out of focus, compositions with tilted horizons or cropping that could have been tighter) that could have perhaps been cut or edited more. However, this was a very enjoyable show with many well-captured images.
Category 21: Profile
Portrait
First Place: Sydney Laput, Huntley HS, Huntley, IL
“Behind the Scenes of Cosplay”

Judge’s Comment: The portrait was fun, well-composed with a clean background to highlight the costumes and pose. Both subjects had appropriate and engaging expressions.
Second Place: Sydney Laput, Huntley HS, Huntley, IL
“Hunkins Softball Portrait”

Judge’s Comment: A nice expression on a cleanly composed portrait of an athlete. The subject's face is engaging to the viewer.
Third Place: Soomin Chung, Prosper HS, Prosper, TX
“Club Spotlight: Schools unite to celebrate, induct artists in honor society”

Judge’s Comment: A nice moment from an event that provided a glimpse of the subject's personality by capturing a strong expression in a nice composition.
Visuales/Design Categories

- Editorial Cartoon
- Informational Graphic
- News Magazine Front Page Design
- Newspaper Front Page Design
- Feature Page Design
- Sports Page Design
- Editorial Page Design
Category 22: Editorial Cartoon
First Place: Malia Miguel, Redlands East Valley HS, Redlands, CA
“Comics: Distance Learning Spanish Class”

Judge’s Comment: This one nearly made me fall out of my chair laughing. It's a great -- and accurate -- commentary on one of the biggest drawbacks to virtual learning. I had to call my wife over to look at this one (she's a teacher). A brilliant observation.
Second Place: Anna Rachwalski, Henry W. Grady HS, Atlanta, GA
"Trump administration seeks to rewrite history with ‘1776 Commission’"

Judge’s Comment: While most students stuck with local topics, a few ventured into national politics. Of those entries, this was by far the best. I'd be proud to run this cartoon in any professional newspaper. Well conceived and well drawn.
Third Place: Erin Liebig, Iowa City HS, Iowa City, IA “Around the World with Covid”

Judge’s Comment: A very clever metaphor for the covid pandemic of this past year. And beautifully drawn, as well. Great work!
Category 23: Informational Graphic
First Place: Ishan Madan, University Preparatory Academy, San Jose, CA
“Student Politics, Visualized”

Judge’s Comment: Without a doubt, this is some of the most amazing high school work I’ve ever seen. These students have found a way to break down the entire student population and their political beliefs and stances - and done it in an interactive way. A lot of professionals could learn from this work ... myself included. This would place well in professional contests. Seriously.
Second Place: Edward Dong, Carmel HS, Carmel, IN
“Stock Market 101”

Judge’s Comment: An amazingly well-conceived piece on a complex topic that baffles so many folks. It's easy to read and the design work -- especially the color choices here -- are perfect. Great work!
Third Place: Heloise Schep, Sacramento Country Day School, Sacramento, CA

“How should you meet the community service graduation requirement?”

Judge’s Comment: Decision tree graphics can be fun and interesting but rarely are done well. This one is. Not only is the information interesting and easy to follow, but the piece is punctuated with quotes from fellow students. Very well done.
Category 24: News Magazine Front Page Design
First Place: Charlie Trent, Blue Valley HS, Overland Park, KS
“Prejudice is Personal”

Judge’s Comment: This is a beautiful, clean design that makes an impact. I appreciate that the background graphics are muted, the headline and the main graphic are clear, and the teasers have their place. There were several entries with illustrations on the front, but many left me wondering what it was about. This one is well executed and not busy. The designer let the image set the tone. Great work.
Second Place: Grace Hu, Ladue Horton Watkins HS, St. Louis, MO
“The Music Issue”

Judge’s Comment: I love the feeling I get with this design. It’s the music issue, and the graphics feel funky, like an album cover. Great mix of photos and graphics, and the use of the grayscale photos is a nice touch.
Third Place: Kavya Jain, Marquette HS, Chesterfield, MO
“Senior Magazine”

Judge’s Comment: The use of color and the composition set this page apart. Looking at the design makes me remember what it's like to be a senior and feel that freedom. Excellent use of a photo and graphics together.
Category 25: Newspaper Front Page Design
First Place: Kathleen Zhang, Troy HS, Fullerton, CA
“ASBS Elections: Virtual Editions”

Judge’s Comment: I keep going back to this page because the elements are so interesting. The colors and the mix of graphics and photos, along with the clear headline and flow, really set this page apart. You can tell some thought went in to the layout. Nice job!
Second Place: Cali Peterson, Munster HS, Munster, IN
“More than a movement”

Judge’s Comment: This is a really powerful front page. I read every name to see that they weren't repeated, there's just enough text to grab attention, and each element works together to invoke a feeling. There are a lot of elements, but they all come together for a cohesive package.
Third Place: Louisa Stuhec, Washtenaw International HS, Ypsilanti, MI
"Volume 3, No. 1"

Judge’s Comment: There's a nice hierarchy to this page. The colorful main photo captures the reader and the teasers are consistent and interesting. This is a great example of how you don't need a lot of color to have a nice design.
Category 26: Feature Page Design
First Place: Sophia Liu, Ladue Horton Watkins HS, St. Louis, MO “Rap the route”

Judge’s Comment: Sophia has created a feature layout that immediately demands viewers' attention. The harmonious two-color scheme is bold and thoughtfully balanced. Multiple digital design skills are deployed, creating layers, color applications, color translucence, and image and line elements. The triple lined, gold color diagonal element behind the subject's head guides viewers' eyes from the title on page 30 to the body text on the following page. The principle of repetition is appealingly shown in both the use of outline and circle.
Second Place: Annika Johnson, Minnehaha Academy, Minneapolis, MN
“100 Years of Student Journalism, Part 4 of 4”

Judge’s Comment: Annika has carefully and creatively placed an extraordinary amount of information for TALON readers to appreciate. Typography style and color was effectively used to define the different informational spaces. Viewers get a sense of change and see the contrast of styles in the school's publications through the years. For additional interest, a timeline is inserted indicating when color was introduced to the publication.
Third Place: Mia Rice, Blue Valley HS, Overland Park, KS  
“2020One Hopeful”

Judge’s Comment: Mia has boldly utilized a photograph of the subject performing. It is effective in attracting readers' attention. Digital layout skills are applied by creatively layering in the main title and subheading along the contour of the subject's body. On page 19, the outline of a gymnast performing the different stages of a cartwheel is theme related, fills space, and guides readers' attention to the body text. Lastly, an additional theme related image is placed at the bottom of page 19 to balance out text elements and negative space.
Category 27: Sports Page Design
First Place: Domenic Fenoglio, Ladue Horton Watkins HS, St. Louis, MO
“Disorder on the court”

Judge’s Comment: Very well done on all levels (design, photography, illustration, typography, writing), plus an unusual subject. Congratulations!
Judge’s Comment: Exciting layout and strong type choices. Good writing but two bad hyphenations.
Third Place: Aniket Biswal, Carmel HS, Carmel, IN  
“Go Figure (Skate)”

Judge’s Comment: Nice design, photos and topic, but color choice could have been better for stronger header and muscle name readability.
Category 28: Editorial Page Design
First Place: TKC Staff, Kirkwood HS
Kirkwood, MO
“Call Ed: Joe Knows and Opportunity Trumps Dependency”

Judge’s Comment: This is a fantastic design. The graphics and colors help tell the story, everything is nicely organized and readable. I love how they are back-on-the-pages and the two pages have a similar layout and feel. A great way to show two sides.
Second Place: Maya Cornish, Clarke Central HS, Athens, GA
“Boiling Point”

Judge’s Comment: This page is a perfect mix of graphics and text. The graphics tell a story as well and have a very useful purpose. The placement of the pull-out quote breaks up the text nicely.
EDITORIAL: Follow social distancing guidelines, it’s the only way to get out of this pandemic

Without many schools and businesses reopening, we are still in the midst of a global pandemic. The need for social distancing guidelines is more critical than ever. Many people are feeling the pressure of this pandemic.

Third Place: Sanjana Anand, Sacramento Country Day School, Sacramento, CA

"EDITORIAL: Follow social distancing guidelines, it’s the only way to get out of this pandemic"

Judge’s Comment: I really like how this page is organized and the use of white space. I like the treatment of the speak out photos and the simple layout.
Multimedia Categories

- Video News Package
- Video Sports Package
- Video Feature Package
- Documentary
- Audio Podcast: Single Episode
- News Show
Category 29: Video News Package
First Place: Roberto Galicia, Shawnee Mission East HS, Prairie Village, KS
“The Harmon Skate Park Final Planning”

Judge’s Comment: The piece ties together the elements of a good news story (a timely topic, good sourcing, and a coherent story arc), and it employs solid camera work and technical execution to create an engaging package that informs viewers.
Second Place: Nina Castro Alves, Gulliver Preparatory School, Miami, FL
“Pollution Wreaks Havoc in Biscayne Bay”

Judge’s Comment: The piece exposes the audience to a pressing matter beyond the walls of the school. The focus on sourcing and solid storytelling make it stand out.
Third Place: Matthew Cullen, Walker Watson, Mira Costa HS, Manhattan Beach, CA “The Cost of Paper”

Judge’s Comment: A well-done take on an important, yet everyday topic that most people probably don't think much about. It does an excellent job helping the audience learn and understand.
Category 30: Video
Sports Package
First Place: Tosh Klever, Iowa City West HS, Iowa City, IA
“Recruiting Trail: Aurora Roghair ‘21”

Judge’s Comment: This was a really nice format to watch, an interesting story, which was compellingly told. The "walk and talk" type interview made for a dynamic interview situation. I really liked the variety of soundbites. Great job!
Second Place: Emily Baldwin, Prosper, HS, Prosper, TX
“Girls Soccer”

Judge’s Comment: Great mix of narration and sound bites. One thing that really impressed me here was the delivery of the narration. Many audio/visual reporters start out talking too fast or not speaking clearly. You did both. Keep focusing on that, and on finding good stories to tell, and you’ll continue to do well.
Third Place: Josh Briscoe, St. Joseph Catholic School, Madison, MS
“St. Joe Bruin Basketball”

Judge’s Comment: This story was presented really nicely. The reporter was easy to listen to, which is one of the biggest challenges for beginning on-camera reporters. One thing to keep working on is the technical quality of the sound.
Category 31: Video Features Package
First Place: Lawder DeSantis,
Shawnee Mission East HS,
Prairie Village, KS
“Hell on Wheel: The Unicycle Gang of Shawnee Mission East”

Judge’s Comment: This is exactly what a video feature package should be. The piece explores a human-interest topic most would find intriguing, and the creators do so in a way that piques the viewer's interest. The storytelling is stellar, the interviews in-depth, and the camera work ties everything together to tell a coherent story.
Second Place: Lucas Figueroa, Gulliver Preparatory School, Miami, FL
“People at the Prep: Joao Carvalho”

Judge’s Comment: This is a terrific profile piece. The story arc helps the viewer understand the essence of the subject, and the camera work and technical execution create an engaging aesthetic.
Third Place: Tara Woodard, Dos Pueblos HS, Goleta, CA
“Winchesters Secret”

Judge’s Comment: The piece creatively explores part of the town's history in an engaging way.
Category 32: Documentary
First Place: Lance Wilhelm, Fox Chapel Area HS, Pittsburgh, PA
“Our Assignment from Fred Rogers”

Judge’s Comment: This was a very well done piece with many great resources and great training for interviewing set-up. The students of this crew and production were very fortunate to have access to this interview subject, this historical footage, and complete support for the Fred Rogers Museum, it seems. I hope they learned a lot on this journey and go on to further their journalistic careers. It also looks like it was well researched and written to craft the story and script. Overall, well done and a great opportunity for these students.
Second Place: Liu Yumeng, Pegasus California School, Qingdao, China
“Taste of Home”

Judge’s Comment: Nice sequencing and close-up shots. So nice to see all of that action right away in the beginning. I would have liked to hear more natural sound to mix with the music. I like her as a character, and I am rooting for her to succeed. She was gonna open a wonton shop, and it was gonna be the best. This was a great, simple story with nice visuals. The character had down times in her life, saw a problem/opportunity, made a change, and began her journey. There are some editing blips, flash frames, and the audio could mix better, but there are so many other good things in this piece that I see the potential. It is also not easy to cut a natural sound piece composed of no narration track and made of nothing but soundbites. Great shot variety.
Second Place: Hu Tianze, Wu Yifan, Suzhou HS, Jiangsu Province, China
“One-yuan Teahouse”

Judge’s Comment: I like the closer shots that started this video. It seems a fair amount of research went into this video and the history of the shop, the way the owner kept the shop going, and what it has meant to the community. From a story structure standpoint for video storytelling, the writing matches the visuals, which is great. Close-ups, I love those because they show detail and emotion. It would be best if you hid the edits with more b-roll. That is something I can’t do. Tea house and haircuts, that’s a great combo. I actually got caught up in the story because the teahouse became a character.
Category 33: Audio
Podcast: Single Episode
First Place: Elena Hubert, Ava Smith, Kamryn Harty, Henry W. Grady HS, Atlanta, GA

“Parents, students rally for face-to-face option”

Judge’s Comment: Good use of NATS to start with, and a cool music bed enhances the narrated portions of the podcast. Good audio quality for interviews at a protest, which is always challenging in such a loud and unpredictable setting. Compelling webpage photos augment the audio. A first-rate effort at covering “breaking news.”
Second Place: Tyler Kinzy, Parkway West HS, Ballwin, MO
“Covid-19 and America’s teacher crisis”

Judge’s Comment: Good use of NATS to start with, and a cool music bed enhances the narrated portions of the podcast. Good audio quality for interviews at a protest, which is always challenging in such a loud and unpredictable setting. Compelling webpage photos augment the audio. A first-rate effort at covering “breaking news.”
Third Place: Duy Lam, North Kansas City HS, North Kansas City, MO
“New Age for Video Games?”

Judge’s Comment: Love the short NATS in the intro segment, and the background music. The overall production value is a standout – and this happens to be the 23rd entry I’ve listened to. Audio quality varies a bit (volume changes), but it’s minor and expected when interviews are being done virtually. A very lively discussion, and a good wrap-up. I’m not a gamer, but I learned something and enjoyed it.
Category 34: News Show
First Place: Eagle Nation News, Prosper HS, Prosper, TX
“Season 8, Episode 16”

Judge’s Comment: Good headlines and variety of camera shots on the news set. Good pace. Lots of useful information for viewers, particularly the anti-hacker story feature. Competently reported combination of stories that required digging and research. Visuals supported storytelling throughout. Held attention and well produced. Clearly the most professional looking student newscast among this year's selections!
Second Place: Bruin News Now Staff,
St. Joseph Catholic School, Madison, MS
“Season 6 Episode 19”

Judge’s Comment: Good opening teases with students, created interest in the program. Great state government package (with standup) reported with lawmaker interviews. Good anchoring supported by over-shoulder graphics. I’m very impressed with the content and quality of this newscast.
Second Place: Tolou Shams,
Mira Costa HS,
Manhattan Beach, CA
“Mustang Morning News 12/9/2020”

Judge’s Comment: Good opening announcement by news director. Sincerely stated philosophy on camera with addresses to contact. Impactful animated opening, and upbeat pace. Quiz clever, invites response thus engaging with audience. Nicely produced and edited with good video and graphic support throughout. Well-paced program, mostly feature stories and not much news of the day. Reporter pieces highly visual and edited for fast pace, although I would have liked to see some differently placed stories for variety. Music generally added to the story themes. QR codes were well placed but needed to be left up longer.