

# 2025 Excellence in Journalism 'CALL FOR ENTRIES'

*Sponsored by the Detroit chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists*

Detroit SPJ is accepting entries and nominations honoring the outstanding achievers and achievements in 2024 by print, broadcast, photo, digital and other practicing journalists in Michigan. In addition, we will be naming a Journalist of the Year, a Young Journalist of the Year, and the Larry Laurain Scholarship winners.

The 2025 Excellence in Journalism is open to entries from throughout Michigan in all categories.

Please read these instructions carefully.

Deadline for most entries is Monday, Feb. 17, 2025 (see list below). This contest is judged by working journalists from other local chapters of the Society of Professional Journalists.

Winners in all categories will be honored at our annual awards banquet on Wednesday, May 14, at the San Marino Club, 1685 E. Big Beaver Rd, Troy.

## General Information

1. All entries must be submitted online through the [BetterBNC® :: Open Call Contestants](#) website. Visit our web page for additional information. **Mailed tearsheets or other materials will not be accepted.**
2. Entries must have been published or broadcast in Michigan **between Jan. 1, 2024, and Dec. 31, 2024.** Questions on eligibility may be directed to: [spjdetroit@gmail.com](mailto:spjdetroit@gmail.com).
3. An entry may be submitted in only one contest category.
4. Entrants do not need to be members of the Society of Professional Journalists.
5. All entries must be the product of original writing, reporting or production by the entrant(s). This contest is intended to reward individual achievement. In most cases, the name of the entrant(s) should be that of an individual or individuals and the news organization they represent. News organizations should be listed as the "entrant" for team efforts involving more than four individuals.
6. All entries must be in the correct presentation format. See information provided with each class. Both broadcast and print entries may contain online elements. *And no entries can compete in more than one class – print, broadcast or digital.*
7. Judges will take into consideration the SPJ Code of Ethics in evaluating all entries.
8. Entries must include the text of any correction or clarifications made in connection with that entry. They also should include a summary of written challenges concerning the accuracy or fairness of the entry (including letters to the

editor, whether published or not), or any notice of legal action. As an aid to the judges, entries should also include an explanation or refutation of any objections.

9. Judges may declare "no winner" in any category at their discretion. All decisions by the judges, including interpretation of these rules, are final. Judges reserve the right to disqualify any entry. In the case of disputes, the Detroit chapter's board of directors will make final determinations.

10. **ENTRY FEES:** Entry fee is \$40 per entry for SPJ members or \$60 per entry for non-members. For students, the fee is \$25 per entry for SPJ student members or \$35 per entry for non-SPJ members. **At least one person within a media organization must be a member for that organization to qualify for the SPJ member rate.**

11. **SMALL NEWSROOMS:** Entries from small newsrooms, defined as newsrooms with 10 or fewer employees, may take advantage of a lower entry fee of \$30 per entry.

12. **PAYMENT:** Payments are accepted via credit or PayPal and must be received by the entry deadline and are nonrefundable.

13. **ENTRY DEADLINE:** Entries must be received by midnight, Monday, Feb. 17, 2025. See specific attachment requirements for each class, inside.

14. **JOIN SPJ:** Reduce your entry fees, follow the link: [Become a Member - Society of Professional Journalists \(spj.org\)](#). You will also qualify for reduced banquet tickets, and discounts at Office Max and other organizations.

---

### Deadlines (at midnight)

**Feb. 17, 2025** – Entries in the broadcast, print, digital and specialty media categories.

**Feb. 28, 2025** – Nominations for Journalist of the Year and Young Journalist of the Year.

**Feb. 28, 2025** – Larry Laurain Scholarship applications.

---

# The Sojourner Truth Award for Reporting on Racial Justice

**Deadline: Monday, Feb. 17, 2025**

The Sojourner Truth Award for Reporting on Racial Justice honors excellence in journalism covering racial justice. It seeks to recognize reporting that is revealing and impactful in tackling new subject matter. The competition is open to entries from journalists featuring stories or packages across all platforms of print, broadcast and digital media.

---

## RADIO / TV

**Note: Broadcast has been divided into Radio and TV Divisions**

**Deadline: Monday, Feb. 17, 2025**

**Radio:** Upload audio files. **Television:** Entries should include studio lead-in

---

### Categories:

**Breaking/spot news reporting:** Single-day coverage of breaking or developing news produced under deadline pressure.

**Community/local news reporting:** A single or series of report(s) covering issues affecting specific communities or neighborhoods.

**Consumer/watchdog/investigative reporting:** Provides an example of looking out for citizens' interests such as saving a family from losing a home or helping correct an injustice.

**Education reporting:** A single or series of report(s) on a broad range of educational topics.

**Environment reporting:** A single or series of report(s) on a broad range of environmental topics.

**Feature reporting:** A report or series not considered "hard news" that includes profiles, human interest stories, etc. Submit up to 3 examples on a single topic.

**General news reporting:** A story or series of stories resulting from a journalist's initiative but excluding coverage of breaking or developing news.

**Health reporting:** A single or series of report(s) on a broad range of health topics.

**News editing:** Best editing techniques used to tell a story. This can be a single story or series including out-boarded elements and graphics.

**News/Public Affairs (regular scheduled programs):** Open to weekly or other regularly scheduled programs.

**News special and documentary:** A program 15 minutes or longer broadcast outside of a regular newscast and prompted by breaking news or a major issue of community concern. This may be a live or taped original broadcast.

**Newscast:** One single complete, regularly scheduled news program.

**Sports reporting:** A report or series of reports within a regular newscast or of a sporting event.

---

## OPEN Categories

**Deadline: Monday, Feb. 17, 2025**

---

**Any format – broadcast, print or digital -- is eligible.**

**Automotive reporting:** Includes coverage of OEMs, suppliers or dealers. Entries will be judged on quality, timeliness and exclusiveness. If being first was important, provide documentation of how others followed. Submit 3 examples.

**Car review:** Submit 3 reviews from a single writer.

**Criticism:** Includes art, music, film, book, theater and restaurant reviews or recurring cultural commentary. Submit 3 examples.

**Editorial cartoon:** Submit 3 cartoons.

**Informational graphics:** A storytelling graphic that illustrates an aspect of a news or feature story.

**Videography:** Best visual storytelling in a story. The winning entry will demonstrate excellence in the use of videography and sound. Broadcast is excluded in this Open category.

---

Questions? Call (734) 277-5922 or e-mail [spjdetroit@gmail.com](mailto:spjdetroit@gmail.com).

# PRINT

**Deadline: Monday, Feb. 17, 2025**

---

**Class A:** Stories/photos published in any newspaper of greater than 100,000 circulation; by wire services; or in magazines, trade publications and non-daily entertainment/alternative newspapers of greater than 50,000 circulation.

**Class B:** Stories/photos published in daily newspapers of less than 100,000 circulation. Publications in Class B may choose to compete in Class A.

**Class C:** Stories/photos published in any non-daily newspaper, magazine, or trade publication of less than 50,000 circulation. Publications in Class C may choose to compete in Class A or Class B.

**Class D:** This class is for in-house and custom publications such as those produced by universities, membership organizations or other nonprofits and businesses.

**NOTE:** Entry classifications are determined by the publication's circulation. For chains and group publications sharing editorial or photographic copy across several publications or nameplates, the largest circulation of any single publication within the group should be used; if the story or photo was used only in one publication, use that publication's circulation.

---

## Categories:

**Breaking/spot news reporting:** Single-day coverage of breaking or developing news written on deadline.

**Community/local news reporting:** A single or series of report(s) covering issues affecting specific communities or neighborhoods.

**Consumer/watchdog/investigative reporting:** A story or series of stories that looks out for citizens' interests, such as saving a family's home, helping correct injustice or exposing corruption. Print and online resources may be used. Submit up to 3 examples on a single topic.

**Cover design:** Magazines and some tabloid newspapers. (Depending on the format, tabloid newspapers have the option of entering as page one newspaper or magazine cover, but not both.) Submit a 1-page layout.

**Editorial writing:** An individual editorial that appears on the editorial or op-ed page. Submit up to 3 examples.

**Education reporting:** A single or series of report(s) on a broad range of educational topics.

**Environment reporting:** A single or series of report(s) on a broad range of environmental topics.

**Explanatory story:** Helps readers make sense of a complex topic. Print and online resources may be used. Submit up to 3 related stories.

**Feature page design:** Newspapers only. Submit a 1- or 2-page layout.

**Feature photography:** A single, compelling photo not of a breaking-news event.

**Feature reporting:** A report or series not considered "hard news" such as profiles, human interest stories, etc. Submit up to 3 examples on a single topic.

**General column writing:** Regularly appearing viewpoint, business, features or news columns by a single writer. Submit 3 columns. No blogs.

**General news reporting:** A story or series resulting from a journalist's initiative but excluding coverage of breaking or developing news. Submit up to 3 examples on a single topic.

**Headline writing:** An individual (not team) award. Submit 5 headlines by one headline writer. Include stories.

**Health reporting:** A single or series of report(s) on a broad range of health topics.

**Inside page design:** Submit a 1- or 2-page layout.

**Investigative reporting:** A story or series covering a significant problem or issue. Entries must show enterprise, initiative, depth and research by a reporter or team. Submit up to 5 examples on a single topic.

**Magazine spread design:** Magazines and some tabloid newspapers. (Depending on the format, tabloid newspapers have the option of entering as a newspaper feature or magazine spread, but not both.) Submit a 1- or 2-page layout.

**News photography:** A single, compelling photo of a breaking-news event.

**Open-government reporting:** To individuals or news organizations for significant, effective coverage promoting open government in Michigan. Submit up to 3 examples on a single topic.

**Page one design:** Submit a 1-page layout.

**Portrait photography:** A single, compelling portrait photo.

**Sports column writing:** Sports commentary appearing on a regular basis by a single writer. Submit 3 columns. No blogs.

**Sports page design:** Submit a 1- or 2-page layout.

**Sports photography:** A single, compelling sports photo.

**Sports reporting:** A single game, news or feature story related to sports. Submit up to 3 examples.

# DIGITAL

**Deadline: Monday, Feb. 17, 2025**

---

All digital and news websites, whether independent or affiliated with print or broadcast news organizations, may enter. But an entry is eligible in only one class: print, broadcast or digital.

**How to submit:** The website address and directions on how to access the site, including passwords, must be included with the entry form. Include the URL and passwords needed to access the site. Entries that do not include this information will be disqualified.

---

## Categories:

**Breaking news via social media:** Use of social media channels to report breaking news with immediate postings that precede or accompany publication of full coverage. Entries should include links to a series of social posts that first reported a breaking news event.

**Collaborative coverage:** News coverage executed by multiple outlets exhibiting collaborative efforts to share resources and information. Entries must involve joint, one-time or sustained coverage by newsrooms under separate ownership.

**Community/local news reporting:** A single or series of report(s) covering issues affecting specific communities or neighborhoods.

**Consumer/watchdog/investigative reporting:** A story or series of stories that looks out for citizens' interests, such as saving a family's home, helping correct injustice or exposing corruption. Print and online resources may be used. Submit up to 3 examples on a single topic.

**Digital media presentation:** A single-entry demonstrating excellence in blending multiple media into a single digital presentation.

**Education reporting:** A single or series of report(s) on a broad range of educational topics.

**Engagement-driven coverage:** News coverage that draws on content contributed or topics generated by readers. Entries can include a single story or a series clearly driven by audience interaction.

**Environment reporting:** A single or series of report(s) on a broad range of environmental topics.

**Feature reporting:** A report or series not considered "hard news," such as profiles, human interest stories, etc. Submit up to 3 examples on a single topic.

**Health reporting:** A single or series of report(s) on a broad range of health topics.

**Newsletter strategy:** Regular news curation that compellingly and effectively generates an audience or heightens awareness of the events of a day, week or month. Entries may include up to 3 examples of newsletters that creatively or efficiently collect and convey news coverage, feature works or opinion pieces.

**Social media strategy:** Consistently effective use of social media channels to highlight, discuss or explain news events and journalistic works. Entries may include up to 5 examples of social postings that demonstrate excellence in strategically expanding or engaging audiences.

---

Questions? Call (734) 277-5922 or e-mail [spjdetroit@gmail.com](mailto:spjdetroit@gmail.com)

---

# ‘Journalist of the Year’ and ‘Young Journalist of the Year’

**Deadline: Friday, Feb. 28, 2025**

---

The Journalist and Young Journalist of the Year competition is open to all journalists (reporters, editors, producers, anchors, photojournalists, etc.) in Michigan.

Judges will consider the nominee’s impact on the practice of journalism through outstanding work or exemplary service to or leadership in the profession during 2023. Entry must be for the nominee’s original work.

*Each nomination must include:*

1. **Nomination letter.** A statement from a supervisor/employer stating why the individual should be considered. Freelance nominees must include 2 supporting/nominating letters.
2. **Resume.** A work history of the nominee.
3. **Work samples.** “Journalist of the Year” entries must include a minimum of 5 and maximum 10 work samples.

**Journalist of the Year:** Nominees should have produced outstanding original work, performed exemplary service and/or exhibited extraordinary leadership over the year in the practice of journalism in Michigan.

**Young Journalist of the Year:** Nominees must be age 30 or younger or have turned 31 in 2024. Nominees must have at least one year of paid, full-time work experience. Equivalent experience as a freelancer qualifies. Internships do not qualify.

“Young Journalist” entries must include a minimum of 3 and maximum of 5 work samples. Each entry must include a brief explanation with each work sample, and context for the judges, who may be unfamiliar with the market. Freelance nominees must include at least 10 work samples.

---

## SCHOLARSHIPS

**Deadline: Friday, Feb. 28, 2025**

---

SPJ Detroit annually awards a \$2,500 grant to a Michigan resident who is or will be a sophomore, junior or senior at a college or university with a demonstrated interest in journalism. The chapter’s board of directors maintains the right to offer more scholarships as permitted.

This award may be used at any institution of higher education.

The award honors the late Lawrence (Larry) A. Laurain, who was serving as president of the Detroit chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists at the time of his death in August 1985 of esophageal cancer. His journalism career spanned 17

years, including stints at the Royal Oak Daily Tribune, the Macomb Daily, United Press International and finally as city editor of the Oakland Press.

**Call for Entries** - Applicants must intend to practice journalism, as evidenced by enrollment in journalism classes and by work from those classes, or clips published in student or professional publications. Financial need is considered.

**No entry fee is required** - Scholarship winners will be honored at the chapter’s annual awards banquet.

### Applications must include:

1. A **resume**.
2. **Portfolio.** At least three clips of any published or classroom-produced samples of the applicant’s writing or other news-related reporting.
3. **Supporting documents.** At least three documents, such as letters of recommendation or other statements from teachers, deans and advisers who are familiar with the applicant’s work. At least one of these documents must affirm the applicant’s enrollment in a journalism class, academic status, or purported interest in journalism.
4. **Personal narrative/essay.** A double-spaced, titled document that addresses any of the issues cited below.

### An applicant’s personal narrative should address any of the following points:

- Why do you want to be a journalist?
- What are your career goals after graduation?
- Describe your journalism-related activities and how they have advanced your journalist training.
- List your educational, campus and social activities with brief details of their influence on you.
- Describe the most important challenge facing journalists today.
- Identify the person in journalism you would most like to emulate and why?
- What would winning this award mean to you?

---

Questions? Call (734) 277-5922 or e-mail [spjdetroit@gmail.com](mailto:spjdetroit@gmail.com)