



2026 South Texas Press Association BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST FINAL DEADLINE: MONDAY, FEB. 9, 2026

ALL ENTRIES MUST HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED DURING 2025

All entries should be submitted at www.newspapercontest.com/southtexas as PDFs or URLs.

Material that appears in more than one newspaper may be entered only by the newspaper for which the creator of the material is a paid staff member.

Please clearly indicate in the “Explanation” section of the online entry form exactly what should be judged on the page when submitting full page PDF files or URLs.

DIVISIONS

Division 1 – Weeklies 1,800 circulation and below
Division 2 – Weeklies 1,801 circulation and above

GRIFF SINGER AWARD OF GENERAL EXCELLENCE

Submit TWO CONSECUTIVE issues. Include one single combined PDF file of each issue (except pre-printed inserts). Quality of local copy, local pictures and general appearance will be judged. Email a PDF of the front page of one of these editions to: mrobertson@fncnow.com by Monday, Feb. 9, 2026.

NEWS WRITING

Submit TWO locally written news stories. Include any jumps. Include the name of the writer. Quality of coverage, reader interest and local impact will be considered.

NEWS PHOTOS

Submit your TWO best news pictures. The photos will be judged as a package. Include the name of the photographer. Consideration will be given to the photos' timeliness, news worthiness, composition, quality and relevance.

EDITORIAL WRITING

Submit TWO locally written editorials. Include any jumps in the entry. Include the name of the writer. Timeliness of the topic, significance of the material and suitable handling of the topic will be considered. Must be written by a paid staff member.

SERIOUS COLUMN WRITING

Submit the TWO best serious columns (included in its entirety if jumped). Column must be locally written and must be a regular feature in the newspaper. Judges will take into consideration quality of writing, reading interest and originality.

HUMOROUS COLUMN WRITING

Submit the TWO best humorous columns (included in its entirety if jumped). Column must be locally written and must be a regular feature in the newspaper. Judges will take into consideration quality of writing, reader interest and originality.

FEATURE WRITING

Submit your TWO best features including jumps. Each will be judged separately, but no more than one award will be made to any newspaper. A multi-article series may not be submitted, but a single feature from a series will be allowed. Entries by writers that appear in more than one newspaper may be submitted only by the newspaper for which the writer is a paid staff member. Originality, writing style and reader interest will be factors in judging. Photos and layout of the package will be considered.

FEATURE PHOTOS

Submit your TWO best feature pictures. The photos will be judged as a package. Include the name of the photographer. Consideration will be human interest, unusual effectiveness, reader interest and composition.

SPORTS COVERAGE

Enter full-pages of sports pages from TWO issues of the newspaper. Material on more than one page in any issue may be included. Locally written sports news and pictures are of predominant importance. Newsworthiness, graphic, style and reader interest will be factors in judging.

SPORTS PHOTOS

Submit your TWO best sports pictures. The photos will be judged as a package. Include the name of the photographer. Entries by photographers that appear in more than one newspaper may be submitted only by the newspaper for which the photographer is a paid staff member. Consideration will be human interest, unusual effectiveness, reader interest and composition.

DISPLAY ADVERTISING

Submit your three best ads created in house (by your staff or your group production department) for your newspaper. If any ad runs in more than one newspaper, only one newspaper may submit the ad. Judging will be on copy, illustrations, use of color (if used) and overall design and impact.

SPECIAL SECTION

Submit ONE combined PDF sample of your best special section. Note advertising and editorial not produced by paid newspaper staff. Entries created by a central office must be submitted in the highest circulation category. Judging will be based on creativity, layout, quality of photos and copy and benefit to the target audience.

LIFESTYLE PAGES

Enter THREE issues. Material on more than one page in any issue may be included. Judging will be based on coverage of social, school and youth-oriented events/activities (sports coverage is not included in this category) as well as style, quality, layout, material selection, originality and use of localized items, including features and photos.

HEADLINE WRITING

Submit your THREE best headlines. The three headlines will constitute a single entry for a newspaper. Judges will examine the headlines' originality, clarity and applicability to their stories, as well as impact.

PAGE DESIGN

Submit TWO CONSECUTIVE combined PDF issues published anytime during the contest year. Include entire issue (except pre-printed inserts). Entries created by a central office must be submitted in the highest circulation category. Judges will examine the entries for readability, innovation, graphics, design features, typography, photos and other artwork.

BEST DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

Submit a week's worth of email newsletters, and in the comment section specify newsletter publication frequency (daily, weekdays only, etc.). Judges will consider quality of writing, design, subject breadth, and newsletter impact. **There will be one overall winner**, and wins in this category will not count toward aggregate sweepstakes points. (To submit your newsletter, either share the “view this newsletter in your browser” link or “print to PDF” and upload the PDFs.)

JOYCE AND FRED LATCHAM COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

All newspapers are included in a single division. Entries may consist of a newspaper's community service effort relating to a specific subject, possibly including (but not limited to) news articles, editorials, pictures, columns, letters to the editor and other subject matter pertinent to the newspaper's support of a specific goal. Please include an introductory paragraph stating the purpose of the series or special coverage and whether the goal was accomplished. Present material in a combined PDF format clearly marked in red. This category will not count toward aggregate sweepstakes points.

JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

The “Journalist of the Year” award will recognize **ONE** individual out of all (not each) divisions who excels in their field. To nominate a candidate, submit five original pieces written by the same journalist for the same newspaper. Judges will evaluate a writer's skill, creativity and diversity. Entries should represent those qualities through selections of news stories, features, sports, columns, editorials or other article styles. The five articles should be clearly marked in red and submitted as PDFs of full-page tearsheets (including any related jumps). Include name of writer. Newspapers are limited to one nominee and wins in this category will not count toward aggregate sweepstakes points. There will be only one overall winner.

PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

The “Photographer of the Year” award will recognize **ONE** individual out of all (not each) divisions who excels in their field. Judges will evaluate candidates for their abilities to produce photographs (either in color or black and white) that are well framed/cropped and technically accurate, convey and creativity—such as an obvious willingness to go above and beyond to get an unusual angle. To enter, submit six photos (which consists of two from sports, spot news and feature or stand-alone images). Include name of the photographer. Newspapers are limited to one nominee and wins in this category will not count toward aggregate sweepstakes points. There will be one overall winner.

**Questions? Call STPA 2nd Vice President
Marc Robertson • 830-879-5901**

ONLINE
SUBMISSION



ENTRY
DEADLINE
MONDAY • FEB. 9

2026 BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST

Deadline to enter is Monday, Feb. 9, 2026

RULES

The South Texas Press Association contest includes:

Division 1 – Weeklies 1,800 circulation and fewer
Division 2 – Weeklies 1,801 circulation and greater

- Daily newspapers are not eligible to compete.
- Each newspaper entering the contest must be a paid member of South Texas Press Association and must have had an employee, publisher or owner attend at least one of the last three previous STPA conventions.
- Entries must be from 2025 newspapers.
- All work submitted must be created by paid staff members of the newspaper.

SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES

• Entries will be submitted to an online platform. For registration and uploading instructions, please visit:

www.newspapercontest.com/southtexas

- Association code to register is **STPAPRESS**
- If you have questions or need assistance, contact South Texas Press Association 2nd Vice President Marc Robertson at mrobertson@fncnow.com or call him at 830-334-3644 (work) or you can also call or text STPA Treasurer Melanie Berger at 979-505-2310 (cell).
- The deadline is Monday, Feb. 9, 2026 at midnight.

SCORING

Contest points are awarded as follows in all categories (except Community Service, Journalist of the Year, Photographer of the Year and Best Digital Newsletter):

- 100 points for each First Place
- 75 points for each Second Place
- 50 points for each Third Place
- 25 points for each Fourth Place

Aggregate points will determine the winner of the Judy and Bill Wilkerson Sweepstakes Award in each division.

AWARDS

First, second, third & fourth place awards will be presented in each division in each category (except Community Service, Journalist of the Year, Photographer of the Year and Best Digital Newsletter). Contest results will be announced at the STPA Convention Awards Luncheon on Friday, April 17, 2026 at the Hampton Inn & Suites in Port Lavaca.

FEES

- Entry fee is \$10 per category including Community Service, Journalist of the Year and Photographer of the Year. Please send a check payable to: STPA Contest, c/o Marc Robertson, Contest Chair, Frio-Nueces Current, P. O. Box 1208, Pearsall, TX 78061.
- STPA dues (\$85) must be paid before entering the contest. Send dues to: STPA, c/o Melanie Berger, Secretary-Treasurer, P.O. Box 1013, Flatonia, TX 78941.

2026 STPA/TGCPA Convention
April 16-18, 2026
Hampton Inn & Suites • Port Lavaca