

For Release: October 24, 2024



AMA Announces 2024 Better Newspapers Contest & Excellence in Advertising Winners

Green Valley News (Dru Sanchez, publisher) scored the highest cumulative points in this year's Better Newspaper & Excellence in Advertising contest to earn the 2024 Arizona Media Organization of the Year award. Media Organization of the Year Awards are calculated from eligible honors won in the Better Newspapers Contest added together with eligible winning entries from the Excellence in Advertising Contest.

Hank Stephenson of Arizona Agenda was named the 2024 AMA Journalist of the Year.

Kelly Presnell of the Arizona Daily Star was named the 2024 AMA Photographer of the Year. This is Presnell's seventh consecutive year winning this award.

Marithza Diaz of Herald/Review was named the 2024 AMA Account Executive of the Year.

Thank you to the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association for judging newspaper, newsroom and advertising categories this year.

This year, 33 media organizations entered the Better Newspapers Contest for a total of 764 entries. Attached is a complete list of winners. They can also be viewed at AMA's News Page and on YouTube - @officialazmedia (awards ceremony originally aired at 4pm on 10/24/2024).

Congratulations to all the winners!

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Questions or comments can be sent to lisa@azmedia.org

Please note: Winners in this release are listed by newspaper and as they were entered into the contest system. Corrections will only be accepted if submitted by the Publisher.

Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	Staff	01 - Reporting & News Writing Excellence
2nd Place	Todays News-Herald	Staff	01 - Reporting & News Writing Excellence
3rd Place	Daily Independent	Staff	01 - Reporting & News Writing Excellence
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	David McCumber & Staff	03 - Editorial Page Excellence
2nd Place	Todays News-Herald	Staff	03 - Editorial Page Excellence
3rd Place	Arizona Daily Sun	Doug Bauer	03 - Editorial Page Excellence
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	Daily Star staff	04 - Best Use of Photography
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Republic, The	Staff	05 -Public Service/Journalistic Achievement
2nd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Robert Anglen and Ryan Randazzo	05 -Public Service/Journalistic Achievement
3rd Place	Todays News-Herald	If more than 3 names type: Staff	05 -Public Service/Journalistic Achievement
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Republic, The	Staff	06 - Special Section or Magazine
2nd Place	Arizona Daily Sun	Doug Bauer	06 - Special Section or Magazine
3rd Place	Todays News-Herald	Staff	06 - Special Section or Magazine
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Sun	Doug Bauer	07 - Website
2nd Place	Arizona Daily Star	David McCumber & Staff	07 - Website
3rd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Staff	07 - Website
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Todays News-Herald	Brandon Bowers	08 - Newsletter
2nd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Staff	08 - Newsletter
3rd Place	Arizona Agenda	Hank Stephenson	08 - Newsletter
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Republic, The	Kaely Monahan, Ronald J. Hansen	9 - Podcast
2nd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Amanda Luberto	9 - Podcast
3rd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Kaely Monahan	9 - Podcast
Division 1 - BNC			

1st Place	Arizona Republic, The	Staff	10 - Best Coverage of Breaking News
2nd Place	Today's News-Herald		10 - Best Coverage of Breaking News
3rd Place	AZ Daily Sun		10 - Best Coverage of Breaking News
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	Tony Davis	11 - Best News Story
2nd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Maritza Dominguez and Richard Ruelas	11 - Best News Story
3rd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Henry Brean	11 - Best News Story
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Republic, The	Stephanie Innes	12 - Best Sustained Coverage or Series
2nd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Lillian Boyd, Yana Kunichoff, Madeleine Parrish	12 - Best Sustained Coverage or Series
3rd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Ellie Wolfe	12 - Best Sustained Coverage or Series
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Republic, The	Hannah Dreyfus, Helen Rummel	13 - Investigative Reporting
2nd Place	Daily Independent	Janet Perez	13 - Investigative Reporting
3rd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Robert Anglen and Elena Santa Cruz	13 - Investigative Reporting
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	Michael Lev	14 - Best Sports Story
2nd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Bruce Pascoe	14 - Best Sports Story
3rd Place	Daily Independent	Jason W. Brooks	14 - Best Sports Story
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	PJ Brown	15 - Best Team, Sport or Sports Beat Coverage
2nd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Bruce Pascoe	15 - Best Team, Sport or Sports Beat Coverage
3rd Place	Ahwatukee Foothills News	Zach Alvira	15 - Best Team, Sport or Sports Beat Coverage
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	Emily Bregel	16 - Best Narrative Work
2nd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Henry Brean	16 - Best Narrative Work
3rd Place	Peoria Independent	Philip Haldiman	16 - Best Narrative Work
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	Tony Davis	17 - Enterprise Reporting
2nd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Staff	17 - Enterprise Reporting
3rd Place	Arizona Daily Star	David Wichner	17 - Enterprise Reporting

Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Agenda	Hank Stephenson	18 - Best Column, or Commentary
2nd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Tim Steller	18 - Best Column, or Commentary
3rd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Greg Hansen	18 - Best Column, or Commentary
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	Daily Star Sports Staff	19 - Best Headline
2nd Place	AZ Big Media	Michael Gossie	19 - Best Headline
3rd Place	Arizona Daily Sun	Adrian Skabelund	19 - Best Headline
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Sun	Jake Bacon	20 - Best Video reporting by print journalist
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Republic, The	Rob Schumacher	21 - Best News Photograph
2nd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Kelly Presnell	21 - Best News Photograph
3rd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Kelly Presnell	21 - Best News Photograph
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	Kelly Presnell	22 - Best Sports Photograph
2nd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Joe Rondone	22 - Best Sports Photograph
3rd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Kelly Presnell	22 - Best Sports Photograph
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	Mamta Popat	23 - Best Feature Photograph
2nd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Kelly Presnell	23 - Best Feature Photograph
3rd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Grace Trejo	23 - Best Feature Photograph
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Star	Hipolito Corella, Arizona Daily Star	25 - Photographer of the Year
2nd Place	AZ Big Media	If more than 3 names type: Staff	25 - Photographer of the Year
3rd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Rob Schumacher	25 - Photographer of the Year
Division 1 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Agenda	Hank Stephenson	26 - Journalist of the Year
2nd Place	Arizona Daily Star	Emily Bregel	26 - Journalist of the Year
3rd Place	Arizona Republic, The	Caitlin McGlade	26 - Journalist of the Year

Division 1 - Advertising			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Sun	Doug Bauer	27 - BEST Advertising Headline
2nd Place	Todays News-Herald	Ginny Frank, Production	27 - BEST Advertising Headline
Division 1 - Advertising			
1st Place	Todays News-Herald	Editorial, Production & Staff	28 - BEST ADVERTISING SECTION*

2nd Place	Arizona Daily Sun	Doug Bauer	28 - BEST ADVERTISING SECTION*
Division 1 - Advertising			
1st Place	Arizona Daily Sun	Doug Bauer	29 - BEST Homepage Takeover
2nd Place	Today's News-Herald	Steve Mock, Ginny Frank	29 - BEST Homepage Takeover
Division 1 - Advertising			
1st Place	Today's News-Herald	Kiersten Garcia	30 - BEST Classified Section
2nd Place	Arizona Daily Sun	Doug Bauer	30 - BEST Classified Section
Division 1 - Advertising			
1st Place	Today's News-Herald	Jackie Berg, Production	35 - Best Ad under 1/2 Page

Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Luminaria	Staff	01 - Reporting & News Writing Excellence
2nd Place	Mohave Valley Daily News	Bill McMillen	01 - Reporting & News Writing Excellence
3rd Place	Phoenix Business Journal, The	Staff	01 - Reporting & News Writing Excellence
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Herald/Review	Staff	02 - Page Design Excellence
2nd Place	Phoenix Business Journal, The	Staff	02 - Page Design Excellence
3rd Place	White Mountain Independent (Show Low)	Warren Adams-Ockrassa	02 - Page Design Excellence
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Sedona Red Rock News	Staff	03 - Editorial Page Excellence
2nd Place	Phoenix Business Journal, The	Staff and contributors	03 - Editorial Page Excellence
3rd Place	Green Valley News	Staff	03 - Editorial Page Excellence
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Herald/Review	If more than 3 names type: Staff	04 - Best Use of Photography
2nd Place	Green Valley News	Staff	04 - Best Use of Photography
3rd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Staff	04 - Best Use of Photography
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Luminaria	John Washington	05 - Public Service/Journalistic Achievement

2nd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Staff	05 -Public Service/Journalistic Achievement
3rd Place	White Mountain Independent (Show Low)	staff	05 -Public Service/Journalistic Achievement
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Payson Roundup	Staff	06 - Special Section or Magazine
2nd Place	Green Valley News	Staff	06 - Special Section or Magazine
3rd Place	Daily Courier, The	Editorial Staff	06 - Special Section or Magazine
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Phoenix Business Journal, The	Staff	07 - Website
2nd Place	Daily Courier, The	Staff	07 - Website
3rd Place	Arizona Luminaria	Staff	07 - Website
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Payson Roundup	Staff	08 - Newsletter
2nd Place	White Mountain Independent (Show Low)	Suzanne Adams-Ockrassa	08 - Newsletter
3rd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Staff	08 - Newsletter
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Green Valley News	Staff	9 - Podcast
2nd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Staff	9 - Podcast
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Luminaria	Carolina Cuellar	10 - Best Coverage of Breaking News
2nd Place	Mohave Valley Daily News	Staff	10 - Best Coverage of Breaking News
3rd Place	Daily Courier, The	Cindy Barks	10 - Best Coverage of Breaking News
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Mirror (Online)	Jerod MacDonald-Evoy	11 - Best News Story
2nd Place	Daily Courier, The	Debra Winters	11 - Best News Story
3rd Place	Green Valley News	Jorge Encinas	11 - Best News Story
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Luminaria	John Washington	12 - Best Sustained Coverage or Series
2nd Place	Arizona Mirror (Online)	Caitlin Sievers	12 - Best Sustained Coverage or Series
3rd Place	Arizona Mirror (Online)	Gloria Rebecca Gomez	12 - Best Sustained Coverage or Series
Division 2 - BNC			

1st Place	InMaricopa	Elias Weiss	13 - Investigative Reporting
2nd Place	Daily Courier, The	Cindy Barks	13 - Investigative Reporting
3rd Place	Arizona Mirror (Online)	Jim Small	13 - Investigative Reporting
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Green Valley News	Kevin Murphy	14 - Best Sports Story
2nd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Maria Vasquez	14 - Best Sports Story
3rd Place	Green Valley News	Kevin Murphy	14 - Best Sports Story
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Phoenix Business Journal, The	Brandon Brown	15 - Best Team, Sport or Sports Beat Coverage
2nd Place	Herald/Review	Matt Hickman	15 - Best Team, Sport or Sports Beat Coverage
3rd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Maria Vasquez	15 - Best Team, Sport or Sports Beat Coverage
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	InMaricopa	Elias Weiss	16 - Best Narrative Work
2nd Place	Arizona Mirror (Online)	Shondiin Silversmith	16 - Best Narrative Work
3rd Place	Arizona Luminaria	Noor Haghighi	16 - Best Narrative Work
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	White Mountain Independent (Show Low)	Toni Gibbons	17 - Enterprise Reporting
2nd Place	Payson Roundup	Alexis Bechman	17 - Enterprise Reporting
3rd Place	Arizona Mirror (Online)	Jerod MacDonald-Evoy	17 - Enterprise Reporting
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Arizona Mirror (Online)	Jim Small	18 - Best Column, or Commentary
2nd Place	Green Valley News	Dan Shearer	18 - Best Column, or Commentary
3rd Place	Arizona Mirror (Online)	Jim Small	18 - Best Column, or Commentary
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Payson Roundup	Peter Aleshire	19 - Best Headline
2nd Place	Green Valley News	Dan Shearer	19 - Best Headline
3rd Place	Herald/Review	Matt Hickman	19 - Best Headline
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Payson Roundup	Peter Aleshire	20 - Best Video reporting by print journalist
2nd Place	Green Valley News	Kevin Murphy	20 - Best Video reporting by print journalist

3rd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Rofida Khairalla	20 - Best Video reporting by print journalist
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Herald/Review	Mark Levy	21 - Best News Photograph
2nd Place	Arizona Luminaria	Michael McKisson	21 - Best News Photograph
3rd Place	Phoenix Business Journal, The	Jim Poulin	21 - Best News Photograph
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Oscar Perez	22 - Best Sports Photograph
2nd Place	Herald/Review	Jennifer Sorenson	22 - Best Sports Photograph
3rd Place	Green Valley News	Jorge Encinas	22 - Best Sports Photograph
Division 2 - BNC			
1st Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Oscar Perez	23 - Best Feature Photograph
2nd Place	Maricopa Monitor	Howard Waggner	23 - Best Feature Photograph
3rd Place	Phoenix Business Journal, The	Jim Poulin	23 - Best Feature Photograph

Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Green Valley News	Andrea Klingberg	27 - BEST Advertising Headline
2nd Place	Daily Courier, The	Designer: Cindy Manzione Sales: Nora Colwell	27 - BEST Advertising Headline
3rd Place	Herald/Review	Jennifer Sorenson	27 - BEST Advertising Headline
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Green Valley News	Graham Harrington	28 - BEST ADVERTISING SECTION*
2nd Place	Daily Courier, The	Cindy Manzione & Staff	28 - BEST ADVERTISING SECTION*
3rd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Staff	28 - BEST ADVERTISING SECTION*
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Green Valley News	Eveline Eaton	29 - BEST Homepage Takeover
2nd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Zoe Cooper, Shireen Samareh-Jahani	29 - BEST Homepage Takeover
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Green Valley News	Graham Harrington	30 - BEST Classified Section
2nd Place	Navajo Times	Courtney Notah & Mirage Wallace	30 - BEST Classified Section
3rd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Staff	30 - BEST Classified Section
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Herald/Review	Melina Christopher	31 - Best Newspaper Promotion Ad, Series or Section

2nd Place	Navajo Times	Leander Begay	31 - Best Newspaper Promotion Ad, Series or Section
3rd Place	Maricopa Monitor	Staff	31 - Best Newspaper Promotion Ad, Series or Section
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Maricopa Monitor	Staff	32 - Best Pro Bono Public Service Ad
2nd Place	Navajo Times	Courtney Notah	32 - Best Pro Bono Public Service Ad
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Navajo Times	Courtney Notah	33 - Best Pubic Notice Promo Ad
2nd Place	Green Valley News	Graham Harrington	33 - Best Pubic Notice Promo Ad
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Navajo Times	Courtney Notah	34 - Best Event
2nd Place	Herald/Review	If more than 3 names type: Staff	34 - Best Event
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Green Valley News	Eveline Eaton	35 - Best Ad under 1/2 Page
2nd Place	Daily Courier, The	Designer: Cindy Manzione Sales: Nora Colwell	35 - Best Ad under 1/2 Page
3rd Place	Herald/Review	Branden Sanchez	35 - Best Ad under 1/2 Page
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Zoe Cooper, Shireen Samareh-Jahani	36 - Best Ad 1/2 Page or larger
2nd Place	Green Valley News	Eveline Eaton	36 - Best Ad 1/2 Page or larger
3rd Place	Maricopa Monitor	Nick Arnold	36 - Best Ad 1/2 Page or larger
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Zoe Cooper, Byron McConnell	37 - Best use of white space
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Green Valley News	Eveline Eaton	38 - BEST Mutlimedia Ad Campaign
2nd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Ingrid Bargerstock	38 - BEST Mutlimedia Ad Campaign
3rd Place	Herald/Review	Jahdai Jones	38 - BEST Mutlimedia Ad Campaign
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Herald/Review	Staff	39 - BEST ONLINE AD (Static)*
2nd Place	Daily Courier, The	Designer: Cindy Manzione Sales: Nora Colwell	39 - BEST ONLINE AD (Static)*
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Herald/Review	Branden Sanchez	40 - BEST ONLINE AD (Animated)*
2nd Place	Casa Grande Dispatch	Stacey Vallejos, Diana Coop	40 - BEST ONLINE AD (Animated)*
Division 2 - Advertising			
1st Place	Herald/Review	Jennifer Sorenson - nominator	41 - Account Executive of the Year

Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Lookout Publications	LOOKOUT Staff	01 - Reporting & News Writing Excellence
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Williams-Grand Canyon News	Wendy Howell & Judy Martinez	06 - Special Section or Magazine
2nd Place	Navajo-Hopi Observer	Wendy Howell & Judy Martinez	06 - Special Section or Magazine
3rd Place	Nogales International	Staff	06 - Special Section or Magazine
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Camp Verde Journal, The	Staff	07 - Website
2nd Place	Williams-Grand Canyon News	Alexandra Wittenberg & Wendy Howell	07 - Website
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Lookout Publications	LOOKOUT Staff	08 - Newsletter
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Nogales International	Angela Gervasi	11 - Best News Story
2nd Place	Navajo-Hopi Observer	Alexandra Wittenberg	11 - Best News Story
3rd Place	Navajo-Hopi Observer	Alexandra Wittenberg	11 - Best News Story
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Nogales International	Angela Gervasi	12 - Best Sustained Coverage or Series
2nd Place	Nogales International	Angela Gervasi	12 - Best Sustained Coverage or Series
3rd Place	Lookout Publications	Joseph Darius Jaafari	12 - Best Sustained Coverage or Series
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Nogales International	Angela Gervasi	14 - Best Sports Story
2nd Place	Navajo-Hopi Observer	Alexandra Wittenberg	14 - Best Sports Story
3rd Place	Navajo-Hopi Observer	Alexandra Wittenberg	14 - Best Sports Story
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Nogales International	Daisy Zavala Magaña	16 - Best Narrative Work
2nd Place	Navajo-Hopi Observer	Alexandra Wittenberg	16 - Best Narrative Work
3rd Place	Williams-Grand Canyon News	Morgan Smith	16 - Best Narrative Work
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Nogales International	Daisy Zavala Magaña	17 - Enterprise Reporting

2nd Place	Williams-Grand Canyon News	Wendy Howell	17 - Enterprise Reporting
3rd Place	Williams-Grand Canyon News	Loretta James	17 - Enterprise Reporting
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Nogales International	Jonathan Clark	18 - Best Column, or Commentary
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Williams-Grand Canyon News	Morgan Smith	21 - Best News Photograph
2nd Place	Navajo-Hopi Observer	Alexandra Wittenberg	21 - Best News Photograph
3rd Place	Navajo-Hopi Observer	Alexandra Wittenberg	21 - Best News Photograph
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Wickenburg Sun, The	Claire Halliburton	22 - Best Sports Photograph
2nd Place	Camp Verde Journal, The	Daulton Venglar	22 - Best Sports Photograph
3rd Place	Navajo-Hopi Observer	Alexandra Wittenberg	22 - Best Sports Photograph
Division 3 - BNC			
1st Place	Camp Verde Journal, The	Daulton Venglar	23 - Best Feature Photograph
2nd Place	Williams-Grand Canyon News	Morgan Smith	23 - Best Feature Photograph
3rd Place	Navajo-Hopi Observer	Alexandra Wittenberg	23 - Best Feature Photograph
Division 3 - Advertising			
1st Place	Nogales International	Priscilla Bolaños	27 - BEST Advertising Headline
Division 3 - Advertising			
1st Place	Nogales International	Priscilla Bolaños	28 - BEST ADVERTISING SECTION*
Division 3 - Advertising			
1st Place	Nogales International	Priscilla Bolaños	31 - Best Newspaper Promotion Ad, Series or Section
General Excellence			
Division 1	Today's News Herald		Publisher: Rick Macke
Division 2	Green Valley News		Publisher: Dru Sanchez
Division 3	Nogales International		Publisher: Manuel Coppola

Story of the Year

2022	<i>The Prison Sell</i>	The Arizona Republic, with reporting by KJZZ. By Joseph Darius Jaafari, Jimmy Jenkins, Justin Price, and Geoff Hing
2023	<i>How a publicity stunt almost got the Legislature to create a new county for racists:</i>	John D'Anna, The Arizona Republic
2024	PENDING	

Account Executive of the Year

Marithza Diaz - Herald Review

Journalist of the Year

Hank Stephenson - Arizona Agenda

Photographer of the Year

Kelly Presnell - Arizona Daily Star

Media Organization of the Year

Green Valley News Publisher: Dru Sanchez