



SAN DIEGO PRESS CLUB 2026 53rd EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM AWARDS INSTRUCTIONS & CATEGORIES

After all your entries are complete, add the total amount and follow [this link](#) for payment.

ELIGIBILITY

Competition is open to San Diego County residents who have material published, broadcast, aired, or online during the contest period from **July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.**

SDPC is partnered with the Illinois Press Association to use its Advanced Contest Entry System (ACES) as our new awards platform. All entrants will need to register, even those who have entered in the past.

Entries to the 2026 San Diego Press Club 53rd Annual Excellence in Journalism Awards will be submitted using a new web-based program, [ACES \(link to contest page\)](#). The Excellence in Journalism Awards recognize outstanding achievements by individual professionals. Editors, news directors, and publishers may enter on behalf of employees or freelancers.

Click [here](#) for directions for preparing and submitting entries using the [ACES](#) platform.

The Sec Code for this contest is SDPC

The Contest opens Tuesday, July 1, and the Entry Deadline is Monday, Aug. 13 at 11:59 p.m.

Questions related to the contest, ACES platform, or club, including membership (for emails, please put "EIJ 53 Support" in the subject line):

- Albert Fulcher, admin@sdpressclub.org or 858-215-1619 (text or call)

COLLEGE MEDIA: Entries for the College Media Awards will be accepted starting Aug. 14, with a deadline of Friday, Sept. 11.

Entry fees for college students apply. For entries written for college publications, please enter at 2026 SDPC College Media Awards on the ACES site when that contest opens. **The deadlines are not the same as the professional contest.**

College students who have published in professional publications, please refer to the professional categories below in the professional entries. Students in this category can participate in the professional contest and still pay student entry rates. You must be a student member and register as a "college" student.

JUDGING

All entries will be judged by professional journalism organizations or individuals outside the contest area. The Awards Committee reserves the right to change the category in which entries are submitted and/or refuse entries that do not meet eligibility. In the case of an entry dispute, the decision of the committee will be final. Judges also have the right to determine that no award will be given in a category.

Entries in languages other than English or Spanish must include translation.

In the interest of facilitating judging, check the number of entries allowed in each category. If you choose to put more than required, please know judges will be advised to disregard extra entries. A single story that is part of a series may be entered in the series as well as an individual category. **Beyond this exception, the same work may not be entered into more than one category. Failure to adhere to this rule may result in all entries being disqualified.**

This is your account – you can return to it at any time during the call for entries time period – **until the deadline of Monday, August 3, 2026.** Once you have completed all your entries, document the amount due and enter it on the [payment portal using this link](#) to pay immediately or send a copy of your invoice with a check to:

San Diego Press Club
302 Washington St. #441
San Diego, CA 92103

ENTRY FEES

All forms of media - Per Entry

Members: \$25

Non-Members: \$40

College (Current students entering professional work): \$10

Wildcard Category: \$50

Body of Work Category: \$50

Rising Star: \$50

Have fun and best of luck to everyone! And we look forward to the 52nd Annual Excellence in Journalism Awards on Oct. 27. Stay tuned for updates, you will not want to miss this year's event!

Again, if you have any questions at all – please do not hesitate to call or email.

SAN DIEGO PRESS CLUB **2026 EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM AWARDS** **CONTEST CATEGORIES**

DIVISIONS:

AT LARGE: THESE CATEGORIES ARE OPEN TO ALL MEDIA

WILDCARD: Cybersecurity: Cybersecurity is no longer just an IT issue. It is a critical business, government, and societal concern. Submit one story, or series on the following topics. Cyber threats: phishing, ransomware, malware, and AI-driven attacks. Cybersecurity best practices that include multifactor authentication, data protection, and Zero Trust architecture, federal regulations and frameworks, or the growing responsibility of organizations to protect sensitive information in an increasingly connected world. Entrants in this category may submit up to five examples of their journalistic work on the topic. Coverage may focus on San Diego County or on the general topic at the state or national level. Winners will be judged on the completeness of their stories, the details about individual cases and, where appropriate, results of their reporting in terms of company or official reaction and follow-up. This category will be judged by a blue-ribbon panel. The Entry fee for this category is \$50.

BODY OF WORK: Submit up to five examples of your best work during the period of July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026. This category will be judged by a blue-ribbon panel. The Entry fee for this category is \$50.

RISING STAR: The SDPC Rising Star award is intended to recognize a member of the San Diego Press Club who is an emerging leader in Journalism or Public Relations with fewer than five years' experience and whose record reflects ongoing and exceptional growth in contributing to their profession. Their track record should reflect a strong potential for reaching the highest levels of the profession. The Entry fee for this category is \$50.

Nomination Requirements: Nominee must be a San Diego Press Club member. Self-nominations for the Rising Star Award will be accepted, or nominations can be submitted by a colleague with the candidate's permission. A summary of the nominee's achievements and growth in professional stature and accomplishments in sufficient detail to document the reasons this individual should be recognized as a "rising star" in the profession must be submitted.

The nomination must include:

1. **Curriculum Vitae or Resume (upload).** Include with the nomination the candidate's vitae or professional resume to provide the selection committee with a more comprehensive overview of the candidate's accomplishments and experiences.
2. **A statement** of how the candidate fulfills the criteria (500-750 words). This should be a PDF document.

ONLINE AND DAILY NEWSPAPERS

Published a minimum of five times a week if printed in the newspaper. **All online-only entries go in this division, even if they are not updated daily.**

NON-DAILY NEWSPAPERS

MAGAZINES

The following categories are available for the three divisions above.

Breaking News *Story that breaks and is covered on deadline – single-day coverage. Include a description – one paragraph max – of deadlines and coordination of coverage.*

General News *Regular news coverage, non-breaking news.*

Investigative Reporting *Single reporter or team. Brings hidden matter to light and shows initiative and depth of research. If coverage resulted in action or change, include a brief description. If a series, up to three examples may be submitted.*

Series - *Single reporter or team. Non-breaking news or features on the same topic not to exceed three submissions per entry.*

Architecture and Design

Business & Financial

Column – Serious Subject *Must appear regularly. Maximum three columns per entry.*

Column – Light Subject *Must appear regularly. Maximum three columns per entry.*

Criminal Justice

Education

Editorial *Content provided by the editor, usually commentary or opinion.*

Election Coverage

Entertainment Reporting

Environment

Essay/Commentary/Opinion *Work representing the individual writer*

Feature – Serious subject

Feature – Light subject

Food Reporting *Note: Restaurant review separate, see below*

Gardening

Health & Medicine

History

Humor

Military

Multicultural

Political/Government

Profile

Public Service/Consumer Advocacy *Coverage of significant public service or consumer issues. If coverage resulted in action or change, include a brief description.*

Real Estate

Reviews: Restaurant

Reviews: Live Performance *Opera, Music, Dance, Comedy, etc.*

Reviews: Theater

Reviews: Misc. *Television, Books, Film, Television, etc.*

Science/Technology/Biotech

Sports *Sports reporting, not a column.*

Travel – Domestic

Travel – International

Visual/Fine Arts Reporting

Wildlife/Nature

Drawing or Illustration

Editorial Cartoon

Front Page Design

Feature Layout Design *Best page design for feature story includes photos and/or graphics.*

Headlines *Include five submissions to reflect body of work.*

Best use of Social Media *Submit up to five examples of your best social media posts*

PHOTOGRAPHY – STILL

Breaking News

News

Feature – Serious Subject

Feature – Light Subject

Sports

Photo Essay

Portrait

PHOTOGRAPHY – VIDEO

Breaking News

News

Feature – Serious Subject

Feature – Light Subject

Sports

Photo Essay

Portrait

PUBLIC RELATIONS, PUBLIC INFORMATION AND TRADE PUBLICATIONS

Submit up to three examples of publications.

In-house or employee publications

Association/Member publication

Special interest or one-time publications

Newsletter *Printed, email or online*

Annual Report

Press Release Writing, Serious Subject *Submit one press release on a news item or feature story of a serious nature, relating to any organization or event. Press releases promoting products are ineligible.*

Press Release Writing, Light Subject *Submit one press release on a news item or feature story of a light nature, relating to any organization or event. Press releases promoting products are ineligible.*

General Writing for external publication

General Writing for internal publication

Video - *Production seeking to explain or demonstrate client's product, event or area of influence.*

WEBSITES

Note – The website and blog categories are meant to judge the site or blog as a whole. Individual stories should be entered under the “Online and Daily Newspapers” Division.

News Site

Entertainment Site

General Interest Site

Public Service or Consumer Advocacy Site

Blog for/by journalists

Blog for/by Corporation or Group

Blog: News and Opinion

Blog - Topic-based *Travel, Food, Family, Reviews, Fashion, etc.*

Overall Use of Design

RADIO AND PODCAST

Breaking News

General News Story

Enterprise/Investigative Reporting *Single reporter or team. Brings hidden matter to light and shows initiative and depth of research. If coverage resulted in action or change, include a brief description.*

Series *Single reporter or team. Non-breaking news on the same topic not to exceed three submissions per entry.*

Feature

Talk/Interview/Call-in Programs *Includes morning shows*

Podcast

Reviews *Movie, theatre, performing arts, books, restaurant, television, etc.*

Specialty Reporting – single report

Specialty Reporting – series (maximum three)

Use of Sound

Audio Editing

Writing Feature

Writing News

TELEVISION AND ONLINE VIDEO

Breaking News

Live Report *Live coverage on the scene of a single news story.*

News Feature Same Day

News Feature Pre-Produced

News Feature - Series *(Not to exceed three submissions per entry.)*

Specialty Reporting – Single Report

Specialty Reporting – Series *(Not to exceed three submissions per entry.)*

Investigative Reporting – Single Report

Investigative Reporting – Series *(Not to exceed three submissions per entry). Single reporter or team. Brings hidden matter to light and shows initiative and depth of research. If coverage resulted in action or change, include a brief description.*

Weathercast

Community Service/Public Affairs Report
Interview/Talk Show
Documentary
Service Program
Sports Reporting
Video Editing
Writing Feature
Writing News

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COLLEGE MEDIA - PRINT/ONLINE

Best Newspaper Submit up to three examples of the publication. No hard copies, please.

Best Magazine Submit up to three examples of the publication. No hard copies, please.

News

Feature

Column

Investigative

Opinion/Commentary

Reviews: *Movie, theater, performing arts, books, restaurant, television, etc.*

Sports

Photography

Drawing, Illustration or Cartoon *Includes political cartoons.*

Cover design

Feature story layout

COLLEGE MEDIA – TV AND ONLINE

VIDEO

Newscast

General News Story

Feature Reporting

Investigative Reporting

Sports Reporting

COLLEGE MEDIA – RADIO AND PODCAST

Newscast

General News Story

Feature Reporting

Investigative Reporting

Sports Reporting