



2025 Osman C. Hooper Award Winners

The annual Hooper competition, presented by the Ohio News Media Association's non-daily newspaper committee, recognizes the talents of the state's top non-daily newspaper editors, writers, photographers, designers and their colleagues.

A total of 24 non-daily newspapers from across Ohio submitted 706 entries for the 2025 Hooper awards, an increase of over 100 entries over last year. Competing newspapers were divided into two divisions based on circulation. Division A is for papers with a circulation of 2001 and above while Division B is for circulations of 2000 and below.

Here are the Hooper Award winners and the comments from judges.

Category 01: NEWS COVERAGE

Division A

3rd Place

Geauga County Maple Leaf

Staff

All the supplemental content that goes along with the major news stories is helpful for readers.

2nd Place

Morgan County Herald

Staff

The amount of community news throughout the paper is really great. In essence that is what a local weekly paper should be.

1st Place

News Democrat (in Williamsburg)

Staff

The variety of news coverage throughout this paper is amazing. There's a nice balance of crime and heartwarming lifestyle stories.

Division B

3rd Place

The News (in Jefferson)
Staff

The stories throughout the paper covered policing, schools, homelessness and sports. The amount of locally written stories was impressive.

2nd Place

Yellow Springs News
Reilly Dixon, Lauren "Chuck" Shows, Cheryl Durgans

Another paper full of local events, but the community forum section of the paper really stands out. It takes a village to create this paper.

1st Place

The Lake County Tribune
Gabriel McVey and staff

The Lake County Tribune is full of news that the county really needs. Breaking news on the front page with the inside packed with all the community news like briefs, police records and school news.

Category 02: BEST NEWS STORY

Division A

3rd Place

The Telegram (Jackson)
Pete Wilson

Airplane Crash Story

A detailed and in-depth report on a tragic airplane crash that claimed three lives, marking the first such incident since 2003. The story provides a comprehensive account, featuring firsthand input from officers on the scene, investigators, and first responders. Extensive photos capture the wreckage and emergency response efforts, offering a thorough look at the unfolding events, the investigation process

2nd Place

Geauga County Maple Leaf
Amy Patterson

Auburn Teachers Pack Board Meeting to Demand Back Wages

Thorough coverage of an ongoing case involving the Board of Education's refusal to pay a \$1.4 million settlement, despite all appeals being exhausted. The prolonged dispute over semantic nuances is causing further delays, impacting the health and well-being of beneficiaries.

Originally filed in 2011, the case continues to drag on as attempts to renegotiate a reduction further stall long-overdue compensation.

1st Place

The Gazette

Eric Hrin

Fire at Dairy Farm Story

An in-depth news story covering a fire at a dairy farm, providing a comprehensive account of the incident and the incredible community response. It highlights the collective efforts to save the animals and support the workers and family, showcasing the strength and resilience of the community. Well done.

Division B

3rd Place

Logan Daily News

Jim Phillips

Plan to use old GE plant for glass production quickly fell apart

Good story.

2nd Place

Oxford Free Press

Sean Scott

Resignation from Talawanda Board prompts search for new member

This story provides the perspective of a district board member who resigned after facing personal attacks on him and his son following an email he sent about protecting vulnerable students. His message, intended to address a serious issue, was instead used against him, causing the same harm he initially accused the district of.

1st Place

Yellow Springs News

Reilly Dixon

Homicide upheaves Yellow Springs

One week after a homicide, this thorough story outlines the situation, the arrest, and the community's criticism of the police response. It includes multiple sources, a statement from the family, and is well-balanced with pull quotes and photos, offering a comprehensive view of the events and reactions.

Category 03: IN-DEPTH REPORTING

Division A

3rd Place

The Budget

Beverly Keller

Ultrasound on Board for Sugarcreek, Wayne Twp EMS

Good story that digs into why ultrasound for first responders will be helpful, how it is used and what it costs.

2nd Place

The Gazette

Stefanie Wessell

College Credit Plus courses at JAHS allow students to earn college credit

Important information to know and understand in these days of rising college tuition. Gets into specifics more than stories of this nature typically do.

1st Place

Geauga County Maple Leaf

John Karlovec

Geauga, Portage Investigators Turn to Crime Solving Club ...

Intriguing look back on mysterious disappearances. Story sets up well the new attention this cold case is getting, then digs into the history of it.

Division B

3rd Place

Oxford Free Press

Taylor Stumbaugh

Affordable housing developments

An important story to dig into and report about for any community. Provides clear explanations of the process and what is at stake.

2nd Place

Yellow Springs News

Reilly Dixon, Lauren "Chuck" Shows

Stories about housing development on Morgan Fields

Thoroughly reported story with good explanations of what is happening and what is at stake for the community.

1st Place

Oxford Free Press

Sean Scott

Uncondemned

Well-researched and well-told story of a historic property, and now an eyesore, that everyone in town surely wonders about.

Category 04: BEST LOCAL FEATURE

Division A

3rd Place

Journal & Noble County Leader
Staff

Noble County Historical Society Prepares to Recognize 100th Anniversary of Wreck of USS Shenandoah

Story frames the historical relevance of the ZR1 within a context that a modern audience would understand.

2nd Place

The Budget
Beverly Keller

Smokey Lane School Bell rings again

I felt that out of all of the stories submitted for this award that it was one of the few that:

- * did not use an introductory clause to brake up the main lede of the story,
- * addressed the how questions early on to extend the narrative of the story (as opposed to beginning with addressing the when/where questions to craft a boring lede) through the second sentence of the first graf, and
- * showed (rather than told) how the subjects of the feature connect to the local community and why the audience should care about the subject of the feature.

1st Place

Morgan County Herald
Janis Keller
Doors Close

There was a reasonable use of pathos in the article that would make this a compelling narrative for the audience to care about. The graf about Carolyn talking about her passion for cooking (the 9th graf) was one of the stronger part of the feature that humanized the subject well. It was one of the most focused paragraphs out of all of the writing submitted for this award.

Division B

3rd Place

Pike County News Watchman
Elizabeth Howard

Famous actor stars in movie

The reporter was smart in the quotes they selected as a means to humanize the center subject of the feature. The transitional elements between the quotes kept the story flowing well.

2nd Place

The Courier

Bob Ettinger

Bluey brings smiles, dancing to Kingsville

Hits the right pathos tone with a good balance between quotes and narrative. Using the children perceptive throughout the course of the story was not only reasonable, but also grounded the story to making the audience care why Bluey can bring smiles to the community.

1st Place

Yellow Springs News

Lauren "Chuck" Shows

"First Presby to evict bats"

From start to finish, told a compelling narrative from the church as a welcoming congregation to the bat invasion that has threatened this church. The audience would care about this story as the historical themes within the story were matched with people forced to deal with nature being a pest in a house of worship.

Category 05: BEST LOCAL PROFILE

Division A

3rd Place

The Gazette

Bob Ettinger

Airborne unit inspires youngsters at D-Day

Good look at community's history

2nd Place

The Gazette

Eric Hrin

Harpersfield author pens book on historic churches in Ashtabula County

Interesting take on local author bringing history to life.

1st Place

News Democrat

Wade Linville

Sons of Toil Brewing

Great look at a local brewery paired with good use of photos.

Division B

3rd Place

Oxford Free Press

Sean Scott

Oxford parent shares daughter's journey with cognitive testing in new book

Illuminating article on a difficult subject.

2nd Place
The Courier
Bob Ettinger
Metcalf made Rosie effort in WWII
Another good luck at history.

1st Place
The Courier
Bob Ettinger
Starcher donates to Wigs for Kids for third time
A good slice of life look at the community helping people.

Category 06: ORIGINAL COLUMNS

Division A

3rd Place
Athens Messenger
John Halley
JHalley_ThrowbackThursday
Good use of columns to share history.

2nd Place
The Gazette
Front Porch Swing
Love the in-depth look at local history.

1st Place
Journal & Noble County Leader
Anne Chlovechok
Anne Chlovechok, best original column
Excellent example of how to use columns to connect with local readers.

Division B

3rd Place
Logan-Hocking Times
Kris Kern
Father's Day is my greatest day in sports

2nd Place

The Lake County Tribune

Christine Price

Good News Happens

Very insightful.

1st Place

Logan-Hocking Times

Kris Kern

Landis family thankful despite loss

A moving column.

Category 07: BEST EDITORIAL

Division A

4th Place

Archbold Buckeye

Mary Huber

Raid On A Hot Day Fails To Chill Press

Timed perfectly for Sunshine Week, this editorial shines a critical light on the troubling actions of local law enforcement attempting to silence a newspaper through legal intimidation. It effectively underscores the importance of press freedom and transparency while holding local officials accountable—even when they miss the mark. A compelling and necessary defense of the First Amendment.

3rd Place

The Village Reporter

Forrest R. Church, Publisher

What Is Wrong With Society - A President Shot

This editorial and commentary reflect on what happens to humanity when we wish for a worse outcome, urging a shift toward unity and respect over rhetoric. It emphasizes the importance of coming together, focusing on mutual understanding rather than division, and the positive change that can emerge when we prioritize respect for one another.

2nd Place

The Gazette

Gabriel McVey

“What 9/11 cost us”

9/11, years later, continues to shape our lives in profound ways. This perspective examines the lasting financial costs, the lives lost, and, most importantly, the policies and lifestyle changes that remain a part of our daily reality today.

1st Place

Yellow Springs News
Lauren "Chuck" Shows
"Imagining a Different Village"

This editorial offers a thoughtful perspective, encouraging readers to put themselves in the community's shoes. It tackles a hot-button issue in the region and presents a positive spin, reminding us that sometimes it's necessary to dig deeper and consider the potential for growth and opportunity.

Category 08: SPORTS COVERAGE

Division A

3rd Place
The Telegram (Jackson)
Telegram Sports Staff
Comprehensive sports coverage with interesting photos to go with the stories.

2nd Place
The Gazette
Byron C. Wessell
Jam packed full of sports stories and fun summer coverage of little league teams.

1st Place
The Village Reporter
Nate Calvin, Sports Director; Forrest R. Church, Publisher; Staff
Full well-rounded coverage of a wide variety of sports and teams.

Division B

3rd Place
The News
Byron C. Wessell
Good coverage

2nd Place
The Lake County Tribune
Byron C. Wessell
Wide variety of teams and sports with plenty of pictures to go around.

1st Place
The Courier

Byron C. Wessell

So many teams and sports, including summer youth sports! Lots of pictures to boot!

Category 09: BEST SPORTS FEATURE

Division A

3rd Place

The Telegram (Jackson)

Red Thompson, Jr.

Thanks For The Memories, Oaks

This was a simple but effective feature on the local basketball teams that a hometown audience would like.

2nd Place

Morgan County Herald

Keith Spare

Justice Steps Down

This type of retrospective could have easily turned into a data dump of stats of the coach's records or been a hagiography of a well respected coach. Spare does a great job balancing between those two points in crafting a moving story about the last year of coaching.

1st Place

The Gazette

Angelo Velotta

Father and Son Duo Visiting Every Diamond

This article presents the rare exception to the rule of never leading with a time or place. The list of locations that the Titman family visited creates a wonderful narrative mosaic that Velotta wove well together for this story. In addition, I found the use of the submitted photo added to the fact that this was more than just some family trip.

Division B

3rd Place

Logan-Hocking Times

Nick Barrell

Having connections pays off for one local girl

Great subject for a feature.

3rd Place (TIE)

Clermont Sun

Luke Servello

Feature on local athletes at state wrestling tournament

I was impressed by how Servello made the performances relevant to the audience by highlighting the careers of these two wrestlers. Use of quotes and stats made this story an enjoyable read.

2nd Place

Oxford Free Press

Sean Scott

Oxford Brave Field Hockey enters second season as club team

It felt like Scott knew how to get the most out of quotes for this story, using them as effective transitions between the key points of the story.

1st Place

Pike County News Watchman

Julie Billings

I want to be a racecar driver

Love the pacing of the story, as it establishes why being a racecar driver is important to Ashley Tackett. Billings did a great job not going overboard with pathos, but using the photo to frame Tackett as a racer and a teacher.

Category 10: NEWSPAPER DESIGN

Division A

3rd Place

The Telegram (Jackson)

Telegram Graphics Designing Staff

The design of the pages uses its photos in great ways. The use of lines also helps guide the reader's eyes.

2nd Place

Morgan County Herald

Staff

The design of this newspaper is simple and straight forward with a nice mix of standalone art and stories.

1st Place

Geauga County Maple Leaf

Pam Molnar

The designs for the eclipse put this paper over the top for first place in design. The backgrounds really brought the events to life.

Division B

3rd Place

Ripley Bee

Wade Linville

The photo pages throughout the paper look great. Ad placement doesn't detract from the stories.

2nd Place

Yellow Springs News

Reilly Dixon, Matt Minde

Nice front page photos. This paper fits so much news into 10 pages, which is hard to do.

1st Place

Oxford Free Press

Macey Chamberlin

Great use of nice large photos throughout the paper. The pages were symmetrical and the addition of info boxes throughout the paper adds some flair.

Category 11: BEST PAGE DESIGN

Division A

3rd Place

The Gazette

Byron C. Wessell and Shar Howe

Power Wheels Derby

Great use of gridding and captions to not overload the page. It seems that the black and white images work well with the overall theme of the page.

2nd Place

The Gazette

Shar Howe

Winter Watch

Great of typography and spacing to give a clean construction to something that could have been a messy promotional piece. I found the use of the photograph on the right side of the page gave the page the framing it needed to support the text on the left side of the page.

1st Place

Geauga County Maple Leaf

Emma McGuire

Geauga Pride

Found the use of masking the images and creating layers within the page gave the overall composition of the page a three-dimensional feel. In addition, the color composition of the page was extremely effective given the nature of the subject matter.

Division B

3rd Place

Oxford Free Press

Macey Chamberlin

The Team Is Like My Family

Effective use of color throughout the page. A little too much negative space within the fold, but was a reasonable set of design decisions and principles in the construction of this page.

2nd Place

Yellow Springs News

Reilly Dixon, Matt Minde

Eclipse layout— Following a moon shadow

Effective use of the "moon shadow" photo essay to frame the columns throughout the course of the page. The rest of the stories are proportional and weighted based on their perceived overall importance.

1st Place

Ripley Bee

Wade Linville

4th of July

Found the use of the strong visual above the fold gave the overall page a sense of balance and focus, while using the community park picture provided a nice sense of separate on the page.

Category 12: ADVERTISING

Division A

3rd Place

News Democrat

Staff

2nd Place

The Village Reporter

Forrest R. Church, Publisher

1st Place

The People's Defender

Staff

Division B

3rd Place

Oxford Free Press

James Rubenstein

2nd Place

Logan-Hocking Times

Lucille Burcham

1st Place

Archbold Buckeye

Mary Huber

Category 13: Best House Ad

4th Place

Yellow Springs News

Matt Minde

"Love to write?" — Lauren Heaton Scholarship for Aspiring Journalists

Ads demanding lots of copy can be challenging. This one uses a simple, attention-getting headline & a strong visual to grab the reader before diving into the copy.

3rd Place

The Budget

Milo Miller

Best House Ad: Closer Look Seeks Contributors

I imagine the artist given this assignment looking at all the copy and thinking, "how am I going to design this without overwhelming the reader?" Don't know how they got to the solution, but they certainly did. Clever geometric design elements and smart use of light and bold weights to add contrast to text. Well done.

2nd Place

Geauga County Maple Leaf

Karen Kaplan

Best House Ad

This is proof that bigger is not always better. Such a simple message but elegantly executed with tight copy. Bravo!

1st Place

The Telegram (Jackson)

Telegram Sales, Graphics Staffs

Best Promo House Ad - Got You Covered

Not just a clever idea, but well-executed with strong artwork. Efficient use of text and smart use of QR codes. Excellent.

Category 14: BEST NEWS PHOTO

Division A

3rd Place

The Gazette

Shar Howe

Buried under snow

Of all the snow pictures, this one shows the depth more than any others. A car, we assume, is in there somewhere.

2nd Place

The Telegram (Jackson)

Jeremiah Shaver

Bad-Boy Storm

I like the perspective of the people and the cars that this point of view gives. You can see how water has taken over.

1st Place

Journal & Noble County Leader

Staff

Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt

Love the emotion and celebration of the effort. This photo pulls you in and makes you appreciate both people.

Division B

3rd Place

Yellow Springs News

Truth Garrett

Locals protest firing at Antioch College's Wellness Center

The concern of the people is seen in their signs and their faces. Taken from the right point of view.

2nd Place

Archbold Buckeye

David Pugh

Crash At Slant Crossing

The right point of view for this setting. Lots of long lines add to the visual interest.

1st Place

Archbold Buckeye

David Pugh

Cleanup at Arch Motel Goes Well

You can't stop looking at this and doing an inventory of everything on this car. In the right spot at the right time, and the image of this sight speaks for itself.

Category 15: BEST FEATURE PHOTO

Division A

3rd Place

The Budget

Milo G. Miller

Horse Progress Days

Excellent framing.

2nd Place

Journal & Noble County Leader

Joe Titus
Paint the Sky
Simply stunning.

1st Place
The Village Reporter
Jacob Kessler
F-16 Jet Fighter In Full Flight
Great action, angle, and detail.

Division B

3rd Place
Archbold Buckeye
David Pugh
Spark Shows
Great night shot.

2nd Place
Logan Daily News
Jim Phillips
Keep me in the loop
Fun action shot and an adorable brave smile on the little girl.

1st Place
Archbold Buckeye
Lynn Roth
Flying High At State Track
Incredible moment to capture.

Category 16: BEST SPORTS PHOTO

Division A

3rd Place
The Village Reporter
Rich Harding; Nate Calvin, Sports Editor
Basketball - Look Of Determination
The expression is great. And we see part of the reason for it because of the timing of the arm hitting his head.

2nd Place
Geauga County Maple Leaf
Bill Fugate
Football Score!

Those goal line shots aren't easy sometimes because the lighting is usually dimmer in the end zones. Like how we see how badly he beat the defender.

1st Place

The Gazette

Bob Ettinger

Interception

Great peak action and timing. Cool how the three players form a line and the intended receiver gets sandwiched.

Division B

3rd Place

Pike County News Watchman

Julie Billings

Winning water throwing Tigers

Lots of layers to enjoy in this photo from the players about to embrace to the cooler on its way to the coach.

2nd Place

Archbold Buckeye

Lynn Roth

Photo Finish

A photo finish and a push to the finish line. An unusual view and unusual winning moment to capture.

1st Place

Pike County News Watchman

Julie Billings

Wilson hurdles defender

Great peak action. I wonder how the running back ended up at the end of this play.

Category 17: BEST HEADLINE

Division A

3rd Place

The Gazette

Eric Hrin

Oh, my stars! Geneva student is winner in far-out contest

The entire story was full of space references, so it makes sense to use one in the headline as well. Fun and playful headline.

2nd Place

The Telegram (Jackson)

Jeremiah Shaver

A Crappy Situation

How could you have less than a perfect headline? If the news is literally crappy, might as well run with it.

1st Place

Journal & Noble County Leader

Paul Koval

Signs, Signs, Everywhere Signs . . . Until They Disappeared

Political season can always be stressful, so this play on words from a song alleviates some of the stress. Sign-stealing happened a lot this past election and I didn't see anyone else use this clever headline.

Division B

3rd Place

Archbold Buckeye

David Pugh

Cat-astrophe Averted At House Fire

The headline is cute since no one was hurt, but I'd put something about the cat further up. But I guess that's one way to get people to read the whole story.

2nd Place

Oxford Free Press

Sean Scott

Uptown alley abuzz with activity as artists paint honeycomb mural

The connection between abuzz and honeycomb isn't too obvious to be cliché. Cute playful headline.

1st Place

Archbold Buckeye

David Pugh

Raid On A Hot Day Fails To Chill Press

Great subtle headline.

Category 18: SPECIAL EDITION OR SECTION

Division A

3rd Place

The Gazette

Staff

Winter Watch

Winter Watch is a fantastic concept, offering both historical context and predictive information to help the community prepare for weather events. The features on how to get involved and what

to do during an emergency are especially valuable, particularly during power outages when timely information might be hard to come by. The advertising complements the content, highlighting essential products and support services available throughout the county.

2nd Place

The Budget

Milo Miller, Beverly Keller, Jason Keller

Horse Progress Days 2024

Horse Progress Days had all the elements for a successful event-focused special publication. The editorial features effectively showcased both the events and amenities offered at the festival, complemented by a nice mix of additional content like recipes and seminar highlights that made it informative for non-attendees. The strong community support is reflected in the advertising, and the collection of interesting photos adds to the overall appeal.

1st Place

The Gazette

Staff

Northeast Ohio History

Lake County edition provides a thoughtful tribute to the founding businesses that helped shape the area, offering a well-balanced historical perspective. The content is the perfect length for an engaging read, complemented by a great selection of historical photos, plus some interesting people-focused articles that add depth and character to the publication.

Division B

3rd Place

Logan-Hocking Times

Staff

Hocking County Fair Roundup

A fantastic edition for post-event review, featuring plenty of photos and in-depth coverage of community members, making it a true 'must-read.' The abundant color photos and detailed cutlines enhance the presentation.

2nd Place

Yellow Springs News

Lauren "Chuck" Shows, Reilly Dixon, Matt Minde, Cheryl Durgans, Jessica Thomas

A clean and easy-to-read layout with comprehensive business listings and reference maps. I appreciate the featured highlights on community groups.

1st Place

The Lake County Tribune

Gabriel McVey and Staff

Lake County Fair

A thorough and well-balanced edition featuring extensive schedules and comprehensive editorial content to showcase dedicated participants and key events. Strong community support is fostered

through effective advertising. Artistic headlines are thoughtfully incorporated to enhance the overall presentation.

Category 19: Community Awareness

Division A

4th Place

News Democrat

Wade Linville

Brown County's fight to stop child sex crimes

3rd Place

The Telegram (Jackson)

Jeremiah Shaver and Pete Wilson

Food Crisis - 6-pc. Series

2nd Place

Archbold Buckeye

If More than 3 names type: Staff

Aaron Powell and the Arch Motel

Exhaustive journey into a exhausting situation.

1st Place

Geauga County Maple Leaf

Allison Wilson, Emma MacNiven

Video Puts Spotlight on Kenston Schools

Solid writing for a disturbing story.