



## 2026 Osman C. Hooper Non-Daily Newspaper Competition General Requirements

The contest period for eligible works is January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025. Contest opens to entries on January 1, 2026 and closes to entries on February 9, 2026.

If you have submission questions, contact Jason Sanford at 614-486-6677, ext. 1014, or [jsanford@ohionews.org](mailto:jsanford@ohionews.org).

**Step 1:** You must register at [www.newspapercontest.com/ohio](http://www.newspapercontest.com/ohio) in order to submit entries. Registration is required again even if you have entered the contest before. Click on the "Register" button. The Association Code is **ONMA2026** (all caps). You must verify the circulation for your paper when you register using Line 16c on the 2024 Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation that was filed with the USPS in September 2025. Be sure to use the number in the column "average number of copies each issue." If you don't know what this is, ask your publisher.

**Step 2:** Circulation divisions are assigned based on circulation currently in the ONMA database. **Division A** is for papers with a circulation of 2001 and above while **Division B** is for circulations of 2000 and below.

**Step 3:** Do not enter individual PDF pages if the entry consists of multiple pages - they must be submitted as a multi-page PDFs (important note: submitting URLs is no longer allowed). The entry title must be clearly identified in the PDF or in the "Explanation or Outline" box on the entry form. NOTE: If you have issues uploading, contact Jason Sanford at ONMA.

**Step 4:** For entries in Category 2-News Coverage and Category 11-Newspaper Design, **one issue must be from JULY 2025**.

**Step 5:** Newspapers having multiple publications or editions under one ownership with pages in common (news and/or advertising) may only enter the shared content under the title having the largest circulation. In addition, the contest is designed to recognize employees of ONMA member newspapers. Work by freelancers is permitted as long as it ran exclusively in your newspaper.

**Step 6:** Please note that there are **two Category Types** in the drop-down box: **By Division** and **Divisions Combined**.

The entry fee is \$10.00 per entry. Payment can be made online by credit card when entries are completed. **Entries are not valid for judging until payment is made. Incomplete or incorrect submissions will not qualify for judging and fees will not be refunded.**

**ENTRY DEADLINE IS MONDAY, FEB. 9, 2026!**

## Newspaper of the Year Award Requirements and Points Chart

Your newspaper **must be entered in 1-News Coverage, 10-Newspaper Design and 12-Advertising** to be eligible for the Newspaper of the Year award. Winners are determined on a points basis. The order of finish in the 20 categories below carries specific points. After all judging is completed in categories 1 through 20, each qualifying newspaper is awarded appropriate points (as described below) that determine the Newspaper of the Year division winners.

CATEGORY	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
<b>**1 – News Coverage</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	
2 – Best News Story	10	7	5	
3 – In-Depth Reporting	10	7	5	
4 – Best Local Feature	10	7	5	
5 – Best Local Profile	10	7	5	
6 – Original Columns	10	7	5	
7 – Best Editorial	10	7	5	3
8 – Sports Coverage	10	7	5	
9 – Best Sports Feature	10	7	5	
<b>**10 – Newspaper Design</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	
11 – Best Page Design	10	7	5	
<b>**12 – Advertising</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	
13 – Best House Ad	5	3	2	1
14 – Best News Photo	10	7	5	
15 – Best Feature Photo	10	7	5	
16 – Best Sports Photo	10	7	5	
17 – Best Headline	10	7	5	
18 – Special Edition/Section	10	7	5	
19 – Community Awareness	10	7	5	3

**\*\* You must be entered in the three categories highlighted in red to be eligible for Newspaper of the Year award.**

### Category Descriptions and Requirements

**IMPORTANT!** Multi-page entries must be submitted as multi-page PDFs (not with individual PDFs for each page) or by submitting URLs.

#### Category 1: NEWS COVERAGE – One entry per newspaper

- **You must be entered in this Category to be eligible for Newspaper of the Year**
- Submit three (3) multi-page PDF issues: **one (1) from JULY 2025** and two (2) additional issues within the contest period.
- Judged on the overall quality of community news coverage.
- No special editions.

**Category 2: BEST NEWS STORY – Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit a single story (sidebar may be included) within the contest period. Entry title must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Outline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on quality of writing and reporting and obvious extra effort that sets this news story apart from usual news coverage.

**Category 3: IN-DEPTH REPORTING – Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit one entire article or series of articles within the contest period. Entry title must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Outline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on the depth of reporting on a single issue or series of related issues. These may include investigative reporting, enterprise reporting or an analysis of a subject or issue.

**Category 4: BEST LOCAL FEATURE – Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit one (1) complete feature story (include jump), or one entire series, within the contest period. Entry title must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Outline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on the overall impact of the feature story or series of stories.

**Category 5: BEST LOCAL PROFILE – Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit one (1) complete local profile on a person or couple (include jump) within the contest period. Entry title must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Outline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on the overall impact of the profile story.

**Category 6: ORIGINAL COLUMNS – Multiple entries per newspaper**

- *An entry consists of 3 different columns per columnist* within the contest period. Entry title must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Outline" box on the entry form.
- Only one entry *per columnist*.
- Judged on the overall quality of writing, clarity and local interest.

**Category 7: BEST EDITORIAL – Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit one (1) editorial from your newspaper within the contest period. Entry title must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Outline" box on the entry form.
- An editorial is an opinion piece written by the senior editorial staff or publisher of a newspaper. Editorials are supposed to reflect the opinion of the periodical, not any individual. No individual columns accepted.
- Judged on the overall quality of writing, clarity and local impact.
- No division by circulation in this category.

**Category 8: SPORTS COVERAGE - One entry per newspaper**

- Submit three (3) sports sections of your choice within the contest period.
- Judged on all aspects of local sports, writing and photo quality and overall appearance of the sports section.

**Category 9: BEST SPORTS FEATURE – Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit one (1) complete sports feature story (include jump), or one entire series, within the contest period. Entry title must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Outline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on the overall impact of the sports feature story or series of stories.

**Category 10: NEWSPAPER DESIGN - One entry per newspaper**

- ***You must be entered in this Category to be eligible for Newspaper of the Year***
- Submit three (3) multi-page PDF issues: **one (1) from JULY 2025** and two (2) additional issues within the contest period.
- Judged on the overall look of the newspaper with emphasis on placement and organization of headlines, photos, stories, art and ads. Judges will also consider quality and appropriate uses of color, art and graphics.
- No special editions.

**Category 11: BEST PAGE DESIGN – Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit a single or double-page spread.
- Judged on the overall look of the page with emphasis on placement of visual elements that may include headlines, photos, graphics, infographics, advertising, color, etc.

**Category 12: ADVERTISING - One entry per newspaper**

- ***You must be entered in this Category to be eligible for Newspaper of the Year***
- Submit five (5) different ads (print or web), clearly identified, within the contest period.
- Entries should be a full newspaper page PDF with each ad identified or a screen shot of the web page.
- All entries must be a result of newspaper production. Agency-produced ads are not allowed.
- No house ads. Ads from special editions or sections are allowed.
- No ads designed by outside vendors. The designer must be an employee of the newspaper company.
- Judged on the overall design and content of paid advertising.

**Category 13: BEST NEWSPAPER PROMOTION (HOUSE AD) - Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit one (1) ad (print or web), ad series (combine multiple pages into one PDF), or section promoting your newspaper's circulation, advertising, editorial, or other departments. Entry must be clearly identified and published within the contest period.
- Explanations may be included.
- Ad must be original and designed in-house (not downloaded from another website with your logo placed in).
- Judged on use of space, originality, design, and message to create interest and draw attention to the newspaper, its events, or promotions.
- Note: House ads do not feature any paid advertising within them (for example, an ad for a football contest containing paid sponsors is NOT a house ad).
- No division by circulation in this category.

**Category 14: BEST NEWS PHOTO - Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit one (1) photograph included on the full newspaper page PDF or a screen shot of the web page with photo clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Cutline" box on the entry form. Entries will be judged on PDF as it appeared in print or online. We also request a JPEG of the photo to be used for presentation purposes only - JPEG format will not be judged.
- Judged on the overall quality and impact of a news photo as an integral part of the newspaper.

**Category 15: BEST FEATURE PHOTO - Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit one (1) photograph included on the full newspaper page PDF or a screen shot of the web page with photo clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Cutline" box on the entry form. Entries will be judged on PDF as it appeared in print or online. We also

request a JPEG of the photo to be used for presentation purposes only (JPEG format will not be judged).

- Judged on the overall quality and impact of a feature photo as an integral part of newspaper.

**Category 16: BEST SPORTS PHOTO - Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit one (1) photograph included on the full newspaper page PDF or a screen shot of the web page with photo clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Cutline" box on the entry form. Entries will be judged on PDF as it appeared in print or online. We also request a JPEG of the photo to be used for presentation purposes only (JPEG format will not be judged).
- Judged on the overall quality and impact of a sports photo as an integral part of the newspaper.

**Category 17: BEST HEADLINE - Multiple entries per newspaper**

- Submit the headline with full article and date within the contest period. The headline must be clearly identified on the PDF or in the "Explanation or Cutline" box on the entry form.
- Judged on the creativity and effectiveness of the headline.

**Category 18: SPECIAL EDITION OR SECTION - Multiple entries per newspaper**

- This entry consists of an entire newspaper, section, page or series of consecutive pages, including editorial and advertising material promoting a single theme. Must be published under the newspaper's name and be a part of or inserted in newspaper.
- Submit as multi-page PDFs.
- The entry may also include any statement the editor cares to make concerning the success achieved and any related examples from one or more issues within the contest period.

**Category 19: COMMUNITY AWARENESS - Multiple entries per newspaper**

- This entry shows how your newspaper brought awareness to a community issue. Examples of previous year's winners included topics on school safety, drug abuse, opioid addiction and suicide prevention.
- The entry shall consist of a description of the community need and how results of the newspaper project addressed that need.
- Include all published documentation.
- No division by circulation in this category.

**Winners will be recognized at the ONMA Ohio Newspaper Fellowship Day on March 26, 2026 in Columbus.**

**Ohio News Media Association Fellowship Day Committee**

Anne Chlovechok, The Journal & The Noble County Leader  
Jessica Grau, Sinclair Community College  
John Karlovec, Geauga County Maple Leaf  
Bev Keller, The Budget