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Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association Foundation name two recipients for 2025 Newspaper Hero of the Year

Butler Eagle photographer Morgan Phillips and Sample News Group's Margaret Weaver share the inaugural award.

HARRISBURG, Pa. (May 2, 2025) — The Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association Foundation has announced two recipients for the inaugural Newspaper Hero of the Year award. Morgan Phillips of the Butler Eagle and Margaret Weaver of Sample News Group will each receive the prestigious honor. The awards will be presented Thursday, Sept. 25 at the PNA Ad Conference in State College.

The award celebrates the exemplary achievements of individuals throughout Pennsylvania news media organizations for their service, support and success.

Both individuals were nominated by Butler Eagle Newsroom Assignment Editor Tracy Leturgey for their actions covering the assassination attempt of Donald Trump at a campaign rally in Butler.

Phillips was the photojournalist assigned to cover the event for the Butler Eagle when the shots rang out. Leturgey credited Phillips poise during the chaos. "When bullets flew across the Butler Farm Show venue on July 13, 2024, Morgan Phillips didn't duck," Leturgey said. "She stood and photographed the moment that made international history." She praised Phillips bravery. "In that moment, Morgan risked her life for the greater good. She saw a need to capture that news, and thank goodness she did."

Butler Eagle Publisher Tammy Shuey extolled Phillips for her professionalism and fearlessness. "We are very proud of Morgan and excited for her to receive the Newspaper hero award," she said. "Morgan showed great strength and courage during a very dangerous event on July 13th. She took powerful photographs of what was a very chaotic and frightening situation. She knew how important it was to photograph the event that thrust Butler into the world spotlight. Morgan truly deserves this award for facing her fears and recording history for our community and nation."

Sample News Group Managing Editor Margaret Weaver played a pivotal role in the Eagle's coverage of the assassination attempt as well. Realizing the extraordinary and historic event could quickly drain the resources of the Eagle, she coordinated staff at the Indiana Gazette, fifty miles away from Butler, to assist with coverage. A week afterwards, as the newsroom staff were feverishly working 24/7, she arrived at the Butler Eagle offices to work the weekend, giving staff a much needed break. Leturgey said without her efforts the staff could have been overwhelmed. "She set the bar for collaboration high and embodied what it means to 'support local journalism' in that moment."

Sample News Group CEO Joseph A. Beegle lauded Weaver for her actions. “Her willingness to jump in alongside staff has quickly earned her the trust and respect of everyone at Sample News Group,” he said. “It came as no surprise to me when I heard she immediately got in her car and headed to the *Butler Eagle* to help cover the attempted assassination of our now-President, Donald J. Trump. Her leadership qualities shined alongside the staff at the *Butler Eagle*.”

Weaver said the experience strengthened the bonds between journalists. “It was an honor to assist the amazing journalists at the *Butler Eagle* during their time of need -- they are the true heroes.” The relationships that have emerged between our newsrooms have been an incredible source of support in many ways for all of us. As we look to shape its future in Pennsylvania, I'm thankful to do so among many dedicated journalists within Sample News Group and other companies across the state who work tirelessly to keep communities informed and engaged.”

About PNA:

Founded in 1925, PNA is the nonprofit trade association for print and online news media in Pennsylvania. Its mission is to advance the business interests of Pennsylvania news media organizations and to promote the importance of a free and independent press.

About PNA Foundation:

The PNA Foundation is an independent, nonprofit corporation organized as a public foundation. Its mission is to provide training and resources to PNA members, to develop the next generation of readers and journalists, and to educate the public on the importance of the First Amendment and the role of a free press.

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