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Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association names recipients of four prestigious statewide awards

Lifetime Achievement, Benjamin Franklin Award for Excellence, News Media Industry Executive of the Year and PNA Hall of Fame awards will be presented during the Evening of Excellence at the 2026 Journalism Excellence Convention

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association will honor four distinguished news industry professionals with the Lifetime Achievement Award, Benjamin Franklin Award for Excellence, News Media Industry Executive of the Year Award and induction into the PNA Hall of Fame.

The awards recognize individuals who have made a lasting and significant impact on Pennsylvania's news media industry.

All award recipients were selected by the PNA Board of Directors' Executive Committee.

The 2026 award recipients are:

Lifetime Achievement Award — Jim McClure, who is recognized for a career of outstanding service and achievement in journalism. McClure served local communities and the news industry for more than four decades, providing exceptional leadership and journalism at daily and weekly newspapers and digital news organizations. He also helped shape the careers of countless reporters, editors and photographers now working in newsrooms across the country. He retired from the York Daily Record in 2019.

McClure said, "Community engagement is embedded in the DNA of the York Daily Record. That drives you to connect with the community as a journalist, and the importance of giving back to the community sticks with you in retirement. The Lifetime Achievement Award fully recognizes journalism and its relation to community. What a great honor to receive this award!"

Benjamin Franklin Award for Excellence — John Finnerty, who is recognized for outstanding service that reflects positively on Pennsylvania's news industry, the community at large and the mission of PNA. Finnerty is managing editor of CapitolWire, where he oversees the newsroom, including the headlines and production staff, and works closely with fellow State Affairs managing editors across the country on issues affecting state governments and Pennsylvanians.

"I joined CapitolWire because I knew it was a news organization that had established a reputation for being home to some of the smartest political reporters in Harrisburg, and I've always taken pride in carrying on that tradition of well-informed, astute news coverage," he said.

Finnerty continued, "Our acquisition by State Affairs in 2025 provided our news organization with a new lease on life and an exciting opportunity to take our old-school journalism tools at CapitolWire and employ them in new and innovative ways. I am humbled to accept this award and extremely grateful to have the opportunity to continue doing the kind of work that makes a difference."

News Media Industry Executive of the Year Award — Lisa Hughes, who is recognized for distinguished executive leadership that has made a profound and lasting impact on the news media industry. She has successfully navigated the rapidly evolving media landscape with integrity, driving audience engagement, fostering journalistic excellence and ensuring the fiscal sustainability of **her** organization. Since 2020, Hughes has served as publisher and CEO of The Philadelphia Inquirer, the first woman to hold the position in the newspaper's 190-year history.

"I'm grateful to the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association for this recognition, which is a testament to the positive momentum we're seeing throughout The Inquirer. We're making real progress in expanding our digital audience, strengthening reader relationships, and ensuring our long-term health through subscriptions, advertising sales, events and philanthropy. We still have plenty to accomplish, and I'm excited for what's ahead as we continue to invest in independent journalism and create a sustainable future for local news," Hughes said.

PNA Hall of Fame — Joseph H. Zerbey IV, who is being inducted in recognition of his career in the newspaper industry and the profound, lasting impact he has made on journalism and the communities he served in Connecticut, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Utah.

Zerbey said, "I am very humbled and appreciative to be selected for the PNA Hall of Fame. This honor rekindled many fond memories of my life in the newspaper business. The changes in technology, the fight for freedom of the press, the ups and the downs, and all the great people who touched my life along the way — all of it means so much to me. My heartfelt thanks to PNA's Board of Directors and President Bill Cotter."

PNA President and CEO William Cotter congratulated this year's recipients.

"On behalf of the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to our 2026 News Media Award winners," Cotter said. "Your commitment to serving your communities with integrity and excellence inspires our industry and reinforces the enduring value of a free and independent press."

The awards will be presented during PNA's Evening of Excellence, held in conjunction with the 2026 Journalism Excellence Convention on Thursday, Oct. 8, at The Central Hotel and Conference Center in Harrisburg.

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 a free and independent press.

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