

2026 Professional Keystone Media Award Winners
Specialty Winners

Category Name	Award	Organization	Entry Title	Credits
John V.R. Bull First Amendment Award	Winner	Spotlight PA	Penn State Transparency: Penn State trustees agree to legal training, improved transparency in settlement with Spotlight PA; After years of secrecy, Penn State board discloses details of closed-door meetings; Penn State trustees undergo transparency training as part of settlement with Spotlight PA; Penn State loses fight to keep internal trustee documents hidden as Commonwealth Court sides with Spotlight PA; Penn State asks Pa. Supreme Court to stop the release of internal trustee documents; Penn State trustees lost access to board's file-sharing service after Spotlight PA records request	Wyatt Massey
Distinguished Writing Award	winner	PennLive/The Patriot-News, Harrisburg	Stabbed Pa. teacher Ellen Greenberg 'wanted that happy ending.' It never arrived; From hidden adoption to advocate: NFL star Ricky Watters' surprising second act; Homeless man killed in Harrisburg 'Tent City' fire had a 'whole other life'	John Luciew
Paul Vathis Memorial Photography Portfolio Award	Winner	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Corey O'Connor wins Pittsburgh's Democratic mayoral primary, unseating incumbent Ed Gainey; Veterans, families remember those lost during the Vietnam War at traveling Wall That Heals memorial in Shaler; Aliquippa community mourns loss of 18-year-old shot and killed by ATF agent; A newcomer, a repeat winner and a photo finish highlight Pittsburgh Marathon races; WPIAL soccer championships: Elena Jenkins' late winner leads Freeport girls to 1st title in school history	Justin Guido
Calkins Family Distinguished Video Award	Winner	Spotlight PA	Unprotected: Inside PA's Broken System for Protecting Older Adults; PA's Mental Health Crisis: A Family's Devastating Story; Millions Spent to Sway PA Judicial Retention Votes	Mitch Blacher
Lenfest Institute Diversity Champion Award	Winner	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	We want to normalize these conversations': Churches are talking about end-of-life care; A 97-year-old woman found 7 Underground Railroad stops in New Brighton, and you can visit them; A community garden brings hope after chaos in the Hill District	Shaylah Brown

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Lenfest Institute Emerging Journalist Award	Winner	LNP, Lancaster	Curiosity & Storytelling: Remains of a soldier from Lancaster who died in Laos 57 years ago finally returned home; The remains of a missing soldier from Lancaster finally came home. Here's who's still missing; Lancaster County to count misdated and undated mail ballots in compliance with March court decision; Late 'Bard of Brickerville' posted daily poems for a decade; his work may now become a book	Sarah Nicell
Freelance Journalist of the Year	Winner	Spotlight PA	State allowed teens to volunteer at popular Pa. attraction that faced past mistreatment claims; Popular Pa. haunted attraction allowed man convicted of exposing himself to children to volunteer alongside minors; Parents accused of putting their infants in unsafe sleep positions charged with felonies; PA Local Heroes: Meet the survivor who became a 'constant advocate' for child victims; PA Local Heroes: The publisher connecting, championing Latinos in her community; PA Local Heroes: The community leader helping people adjust to life after prison; Clearfield County will make \$1M in 5-year contracts with ICE, Moshannon detention center operator; PA Local Heroes: Harnessing the power of Mozart and math at the Chester Children's Chorus; PA Local Heroes: The former refugee welcoming Pennsylvania's newest arrivals; PA Local Heroes: How a peace activist found her calling; Ukrainian Americans in Pa. keep a close eye on changing political landscapes and a war-torn nation	Ann Rejrat
Public Service Award	Winner	Altoona Mirror	Season of Sharing: A Dream Come True; Dreams go on with the help of the community; 2025 Season of Sharing Recipient; Season of Sharing hits record	Mirror Staff
G. Richard Dew Award for Journalistic Service	Winner	Spotlight PA	Voices of the Epidemic: You can decide how billions to fight the opioid epidemic should be spent with our new tool; Opioid funds, public voices: What Spotlight PA heard and learned by listening to you; Opioid settlement spending faces growing scrutiny as Pennsylvania awaits millions more; Why a powerful Pa. board is shielded from the state's public records law; Secretive board overseeing Pa.'s billion-dollar opioid response invites public to speak for 1st time; You asked about Pennsylvania's opioid crisis and settlement funds. We've got answers.	Ed Mahon

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Reader Initiative Award	Winner	Spotlight PA	Spotlight PA Berks: This Pa. college made dramatic cuts to avoid closure. Experts say its financial future is still murky.; How Berks County cooperates with ICE without helping it make arrests; Why Erie and Reading's special redevelopment districts are getting off to such different starts; How a Berks County family attacked by a rabid cat fell through gaps in Pa.'s animal control system; Without legal help, fewer Reading tenants prevail in eviction cases; Meet a Berks County woman who is turning her loss into support for students; Spotlight PA to host Community Forums starting in January 2026	Staff
Public Notice Award	Winner	The Times-Tribune, Scranton	Taylor to hold hearing, consider ordinance regulating solar farms; Renewable natural gas plant at Keystone Sanitary Landfill seeks expansion; Keystone Sanitary Landfill looks to send wastewater to new destination; Mayfield to open bids on \$15M mine reclamation project for industrial park; Jessup to hold hearing for stricter data center legislation; Ex-Amity Landfill in Taylor applies with DEP for liner, leachate collection; Carbondale to consider referendum for home rule charter update; Developer looks to build 30-plus data centers in North Pocono; Clifton Twp. to hear data center zoning challenge Tuesday; Data center developer also building warehouse by Lackawanna Energy Center; Developer shifts from warehouse to data center by power plant in Jessup; Jessup re-amends data center zoning, sets new hearing for Breaker Street; LHVA to build \$2M bridge, walking trail connecting Olyphant to Dickson City; Data center developer tied to projects in Archbald, Blakely moves to Dickson City; Data center developer tied to projects in Archbald, Blakely moves to Dickson City	Frank Lesnefsky
A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism in PA	First Place	Pittsburgh's Public Source	Alcoa mines Australia's forest: How Pittsburgh's Alcoa is undermining a rare forest to fuel its global aluminum empire; Alcoa's Australian refineries drove flight from two towns, and its waste threatens a third; Will Australia revisit the deal that led a Pittsburgh firm to depend on the ore beneath its trees?; Alcoa's Australian mining plan draws unprecedented opposition; Why — and how — journalists from a nonprofit newsroom in Pittsburgh went to Australia	Quinn Glabicki & Jamie Wiggan

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A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism in PA	Second Place	PennLive/The Patriot-News, Harrisburg	Death County, PA - Most of the people housed at Dauphin County Prison haven't been convicted of a crime. Under our justice system, they are innocent until proven guilty. Pa. prisons make changes to drug tests after complaints of 'false positives'; 'That's not my job': Dauphin County coroner says jail problems aren't his responsibility; 5 medical care providers vie for Dauphin County Prison contract worth millions; Jail's medical provider ends contract early, costing Dauphin County at least \$80K; Ex-official discloses long-ago payments from Dauphin County jail medical provider; Future of health care at troubled Dauphin County jail to be decided this week; 'I feel like I let him down': Inmates tried to stop suicide in Dauphin County jail; Prison board chair steps down as Dauphin County jail begins move to new healthcare provider; Dauphin County Prison Board hikes phone rates, making it the costliest in the region; New medical provider at Dauphin County jail to meet with public; Dauphin County jail medical contractor demanded positive press release to continue services; New medical provider takes over at Dauphin County jail: 'Penalize me if we don't deliver'; Dauphin County jail's new medical provider deals with 'obstruction' by company it replaced: 'It puts people at risk.'; Isolation in Dauphin County jail can lead to lifelong medical problems: 'If I don't get out of here soon, I'm going to die'	Joshua Vaughn

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A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism in PA	Honorable Mention	PennLive/The Patriot-News, Harrisburg	Dauphin County commissioner crashes government SUV for the 4th time; Dauphin County commissioner who crashed SUV didn't attend event he blamed for lateness; Dauphin County commissioners ask for 'thoughts and prayers' after colleague's crash, meeting debacle; Dauphin County commissioner stripped of duties after crash, bizarre meeting; Dauphin County official told cops he drank 1/2 bottle of vodka before driving to public meeting; A keg, 4 crashes and 2 police rides: Dauphin County official's unique history behind the wheel; A Dauphin County official has been charged with DUI. Can he be fired?; Dauphin County commissioner calls for colleague to resign after crash, DUI charge; Consultant to be fired after delaying call to detective about Dauphin County commissioner's crash; Dauphin County takes action against employee who left commissioner at drug/alcohol testing facility; Democratic state officials call allegations against Hartwick serious, but don't ask for resignation; Commissioners to pull George Hartwick's access to Dauphin County vehicles, investigate crashes; Dauphin County official skips work for 2 weeks after crash, DUI charge; Dauphin County could lose \$400K after project championed by George Hartwick falters; Dauphin County commissioner returns to work 1 month after DUI charge; Dauphin County commissioner explains month-long absence after DUI charge; Dauphin County set to lose \$400K after commissioner fumbled major project, colleagues say; Here's how much it cost to fix Dauphin County vehicle after commissioner's DUI crash; Dauphin County commissioner charged with DUI opts for no court hearing; Most of Dauphin County official's duties restored following DUI charge, rehab stay; Dauphin County official accepted into program that could clear his DUI charges	Juliette Rihl, Joshua Vaughn, Jonathan Bergmueller & Jenna Wise