



*2026 Saskatchewan Weekly
Newspapers Association*

Better Newspapers Competition

Call For Entries



2026 Call for Entries Premier Award Categories

Eligibility

The competition is open to Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association member newspapers. Any writer/photographer/graphic designer submitting entries to be judged must be an employee or a freelancer commissioned by the member newspaper. The publication period of all entries is **January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025**

Rules/Guidelines

- **Each entry must have TWO PAPER TEARSHEETS** with an entry form attached to each. If the entry has **multiple pages the entry form only needs to be attached to the first page**. One tearsheet must be a hard copy paper tearsheet but the other can be a printout of the pdf version on 8 ½ x 11 paper.
- Make sure the entry form includes the newspaper and writer/photographer/designer name, as well as the category name AND number. The names that appear on the entry form will be the names listed on the certificate and plaques.
- Entries that are not properly labeled may be disqualified.
- The article/picture being entered **MUST** be clearly marked on each tearsheet.
- There is a fee of \$5.00 per entry. If you would like to be invoiced, an invoice request form must be filled out and sent in with your entries.
- No Syndicated material will be accepted.

Forward your entries to:

Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association
#234 2002 Quebec Avenue
Saskatoon, SK., S7K 1W4
Attention: Nicole Nater

Deadline for Entries:

January 23, 2026. Late entries will not be judged.

www.newsoptimist.ca

Don't miss these online columns



Garden Chat



**anbidge
on
Horticulture**
By Patricia Anbidge

Invoicing Information

If you would like to be invoiced, please ensure the completed form is included with your entries. *Entries that are received without payment **OR** this form will not be accepted.*

Business Name _____

Newspaper Name _____

Invoicing address _____

Contact Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

Number of entries: _____

@ \$5.00 = _____

Signature _____

2026 Premier Awards Official Entry Form

Name of newspaper:_____

Category (name and #):_____

Credit to: (these name(s) will appear on the plaque/certificate)

*** NO STAPLES please use paper clips.***

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Premier Award Categories

Category 1A: Best Advertisement

Each newspaper entering this category must select a single ad, which is unique and created or designed for their paper, including house ads.

Scoring: Ad design (50) Originality (25) Visual Impact (25)

Category 1B: Series of Advertisements

Each newspaper entering this category must select a series of ads for the same client. The ads must be unique and created or designed for your paper, including house ads.

Scoring: Ad Design (50) Originality (25) Visual Impact (25)

Category 2: Best Special Section

Each newspaper entering this category must select a special section, or locally produced advertising supplement. A special section is a stand-alone piece not produced regularly by the newspaper. Judging will be based on the originality of the idea, creativity, impact of the section, local editorial content relative to the idea, advertising design, layout and typography.

- Only one entry per paper

Scoring: Quality of Writing (20) Clarity (20) Impact to Community (20) Content (20) Presentation (20)

Category 3: Salute to Veteran/Armed Forces Coverage (Story, series of stories or supplement)

Salute to Veterans or Armed Forces Story or series of stories that focus on the contribution of local veterans to wars or conflict, including but not limited to World Wars I and II, Korean, Gulf or Vietnam Wars, plus those of members currently serving in any capacity at any conflict worldwide. The entries will be judged on style, depth, originality and quality of writing that focuses on the impact of the experiences of those who have served or are serving. As global conflicts have a deep impact on the human condition, this category is not limited to Canadian veterans, it is meant to include anyone who has been impacted by war while serving for their country, as long as the person(s) featured is originally from or currently resides in the local community served by the newspaper.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (20) Clarity (20) Impact to Community (20) Content (20) Presentation (20)

Category 4: Best Page Design

A page that has been designed with an appealing layout, grabs the reader's attention through use of graphics/imagery and offers high readability. It does not ignore the importance of all the elements placed in a mindful manner: typeface, colour/greyscale, white space, graphics/photographs, and use of the whole page. It can be for a feature article, news story or photo collage.

Scoring: Presentation (25) Design/Creativity (25) Visual Impact (25) Use of colour/whitespace (25)

Category 5: Best Agriculture Coverage (Single Story or Feature)

This award recognizes excellence in writing by an individual journalist, dealing with a community-oriented agricultural issue. An entry will consist of a single news or feature story that focuses on issues facing agriculture in general, or an agricultural story specific to the newspaper's coverage area. Syndicated material will not be accepted. An explanatory letter from the editor or publisher may accompany the entry to provide background information.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 6: Best Headline Writing

The headline must have been written by a regular staff member for a locally produced story. The headline entry can come from any section of a regular edition and must be clearly identified on the page.

Scoring: Presentation (35) Impact (35) Originality (30)

Category 7: Editorial Writing Excellence

The intent of this award is to recognize excellence in dealing editorially with issues that are of purely local or regional interest. Entries should be stimulating, well researched, clearly stated expressions of opinion on topics of local importance. Background material may be submitted to broaden the judges' understanding of the issue.

For the purpose of this competition "editorial" is defined as an opinion piece written by editorial staff or publisher of a newspaper. Editorials often reflect the opinion of the periodical on issues that the writer(s) feel are important for their readership to know the newspaper's opinion.

- Must submit entries from three consecutive issues or if column/editorial is not published weekly, entries must be from three consecutive published pieces.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 8: Columnist of the Year

Entries will be from those who write a general interest column on a regular basis for an SWNA member paper of any circulation. Entries should be lively, original, tight and grammatical. They should show some courage regarding local issues. Covering more than one subject is good. Presentation counts.

For the purpose of this competition "columnist" is defined as a journalist who writes for a publication in a regular series, creating an article that usually offers commentary and opinions. A column is personality-driven by the author and explicitly contains an opinion of point of view.

- Must submit entries from three consecutive issues or if column/editorial is not published weekly, entries must be from three consecutive published pieces.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 9: Best Sports Story or Series of Stories

Each newspaper entering this category must submit a single story, or a series of stories with a single theme or topic, pertaining to sports activities. The story (or series) may be on individuals, teams, systems, products, innovations or history.

For the purpose of this competition “sports” will be defined as a physical activity involving disciplined use of muscle groups requiring mental preparations and strategic method and whose outcome is determined by skill, not chance. It occurs in an organized, structured and competitive environment in which a winner is declared. Physical activities are those activities in which bodily movements are valued; there is reason for making up games and contests where the movements have a central role and are valued in different physical activities. In some physical activities, speed is the feature valued, in others, accuracy; in others, the length of time the movements can be continued, and in others the feeling is the important factor.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Pertains to Sports (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 10A: Best Saskatchewan Arts or Cultural Story.

The (story/article/column) may be on an individual organization, product, innovation or history, however, it must relate directly to cultural expression, activities or experiences that are having an impact in Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan has many forms of cultural expression. When we refer to culture we are often speaking about the arts, heritage, multiculturalism and/or cultural industries. The arts include visual and literary arts, as well as dance, theatre, media arts, music, debate, motion pictures and crafts. Heritage includes the many areas of preservation and education of our history and prehistoric knowledge, identity and artifacts, found in museums, archaeology, genealogy, folklore, libraries, natural environment, architecture, etc. Multiculturalism includes the ethno-cultural backgrounds, cultural and linguistic diversity and the ongoing work to build a society free from racism. Cultural industries refers to the business aspect of any form of culture that has an impact on Saskatchewan economy, such as craft-making, filmmaking, sound recording, publishing etc. Culture includes our languages, our heritage, our stories, our traditions, our rituals, our spirituality, our inventions, our products and our expressions. The people of Saskatchewan experience and reflect their culture daily, through a variety of cultural activities, such as creation, preservation, research, presentation, appreciation, participation, education, professional development, and training.

* Only two entries per writer, per paper.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 10B: Best Saskatchewan Cultural Series of Stories

The series may be on individual's organizations, products, innovations or history; however, it must relate directly to cultural expression, activities or experiences that are having an impact in Saskatchewan and should be based on a single topic or theme.

Saskatchewan has many forms of cultural expression. When we refer to culture we are often speaking about the arts, heritage, multiculturalism and/or cultural industries. The arts include visual and literary arts, as well as dance, theatre, media arts, music, debate, motion pictures and crafts. Heritage includes the many areas of preservation and education of our history and prehistoric knowledge, identity and artifacts, found in museums, archaeology, genealogy, folklore, libraries, natural environment, architecture,

etc. Multiculturalism includes the ethno-cultural backgrounds, cultural and linguistic diversity and the ongoing work to build a society free from racism. Cultural industries refers to the business aspect of any form of culture that has an impact on Saskatchewan economy, such as craft-making, filmmaking, sound recording, publishing etc. Culture includes our languages, our heritage, our stories, our traditions, our rituals, our spirituality, our inventions, our products and our expressions. The people of Saskatchewan experience and reflect their culture daily, through a variety of cultural activities, such as creation, preservation, research, presentation, appreciation, participation, education, professional development and training.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 11: Best Recreation Story or Series of Stories

Each newspaper entering this category must select a single story, or a series of stories with a single theme or topic, pertaining to recreational activities. The story (or series), may be on individuals, organizations, products, innovations or history.

For the purpose of this competition “recreation” is defined as an event or experience in which an individual voluntarily participates during his/her leisure time because of the personal benefits and satisfaction he/she derives from participating and is not impelled by a delayed reward beyond itself or by any declaring of a winner.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 12: Best Educational Coverage K-12 (Single Story or Feature)

This award recognizes excellence in the coverage of K-12 education. An entry will consist of a single news or feature story that focuses on issues or general activities within grades K-12 and specific to the newspaper's coverage area. Syndicated material will not be accepted. An explanatory letter from the editor or publisher may accompany the entry to provide background information.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 13: Best Tourism Story or Series of Stories

Each newspaper entering this category must submit a single story, or a series of stories, from multiple issues with a single theme or topic, pertaining to tourism in Saskatchewan. The story (or series) may be on individuals, organizations, products, events, attractions, innovations, destinations or history. A special section, as a whole, will not be accepted.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 14: Best Business Writing Award

This award recognizes the newspaper judged to have written and presented the best business writing dealing with a community-oriented business or industry issue. An entry will consist of a story or series of stories written by a journalist employed by the newspaper. Entries may be in the form of feature or news stories, editorials or special sections. Syndicated material will not be accepted.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 15: Best First Nations Coverage

Each newspaper entering this category must select a single story, column editorial or a series of stories, with a single theme or topic, pertaining to First Nations. The story (or series) may be on individuals, special events, history, culture, spirituality, business ventures or contemporary issues. Submissions will be evaluated primarily on their capacity to enhance the public understanding and awareness of First Nation people and their issues.

For the purpose of this competition, the following definitions of First Nations and First Nation individuals will be used: First Nation Band - A group of First Nations declared by the Governor-in-Council to be a band for the purposes of the Indian Act.

Scoring: Ability to contribute to a better understanding and awareness of First Nations (20) Quality of Writing (20) Clarity (20) Impact to Community (20) Content (20)

Category 16: Best News Story of the Year

An entry will consist of a story or related stories dealing with a local event of some newsworthy importance. An explanatory letter may accompany the entry to provide background information. Syndicated material will not be accepted. Judging will be on the basis of local content, impact, timeliness and quality of writing.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 17: Best Feature Story

Each newspaper entering this category must select one story published in one edition about one specific subject of local interest. Judging will be based on approach, quality of writing, clarity of presentation and uniqueness.

For the purpose of this competition "feature story" is defined as a special human-interest story or article that is not closely tied to a recent news event. It goes into great detail regarding concepts and ideas of specific market interest.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 18A: Best Health/Health Care Coverage (Single Story)

Each newspaper entering this category must submit a single story pertaining to health care or the health and well-being of residents. The piece may be on individuals, organizations, innovations, history, and/or population health and well-being.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 18B: Best Health/Health Care Coverage (Series of Stories)

Each newspaper entering this category must submit a series of stories, clearly linked to a single topic or theme, pertaining to health care or the health and well-being of residents. The piece may be on individuals, organizations, innovations, history, and/or population health and well-being.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 19: Best Government Coverage

Each newspaper entering this category must select a story or a series of stories (maximum of three) pertaining to decisions and/or actions by government and the impact of those decisions and actions on the community. The stories may cover municipal, provincial or federal government, but must relate directly to the newspaper's community and coverage area.

Judging will be based on local content, impact, timeliness and quality of writing.

Stories considered for this award must go beyond the dissemination of council meeting minutes. These stories should demonstrate the importance of journalism to democracy.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 20: Best Habitat Conservation Writing

This award is available to SWNA newspapers, their writing staff and/or freelancers commissioned by the paper for locally generated, first run stories. Stories must provide environmentally-focused information and provoke discussion related to: wetlands and their associated uplands habitats, water and watershed management, water quality and quantity issues relating to habitat conservation, Agricultural crops and practices that contribute to habitat conservation, native grassland conservation and management, research leading to better conservation practices, individuals and organizations contributing to wetlands and associated habitat conservation, wildlife habitat conservation, conservation education.

Scoring: Quality of Writing (25) Clarity (25) Impact to Community (25) Content (25)

Category 21: Best Photo Essay of the Year

A well-presented storytelling photographic essay is an important communicator. This award recognizes photographic excellence, attention to composition, communication, quality of pictures, presentation, graphic display and completeness of the message. Any image created or manipulated beyond basic lighting and cropping with computer software is not acceptable. Photo credit must appear in the paper.

For the purpose of this competition "photo-essay (or photographic essay)" is defined as set or series of photographs that are intended to tell a story or evoke a series of emotions in the viewer. A photo essay will often show pictures in deep emotional stages. Photo essays range from purely photographic works to photographs with captions or small notes to full text essays with a few or many accompanying photographs. Photo essays can be sequential in nature, intended to be viewed in a particular order, or they may consist of non-ordered photographs, which may be viewed all at once or in an order chosen by the viewer.

Scoring: Presentation (focus, clarity, cropping) (25) Impact (25) Originality & forethought (25) News or Feature Value (25)

Category 22: Best People Photo

Best People Photo must be a single photo that depicts emotion, imagination, expression of interest, action or illusion of movement - a "Polaroid Moment", as it were, with good exposure, composition and reproduction. One picture or single subject will be accepted

for judging. Any image created or manipulated beyond basic lighting and cropping with computer software is not acceptable. Photo credit must appear in the paper.

Scoring: Presentation (focus, clarity, cropping) (25) Impact (25) Originality & forethought (25) News or Feature Value (25)

Category 23: Best Wildlife Photo

Best Wildlife Photo must be a single photo that captures wildlife in still, action or illusion of movement with imagination, good exposure, composition and reproduction. One picture or single subject will be accepted for judging. Any image created or manipulated beyond basic lighting and cropping with computer software is not acceptable. Photo credit must appear in the paper.

Scoring: Presentation (focus, clarity, cropping) (25) Impact (25) Originality & forethought (25) News or Feature Value (25)

Category 24: Best Colour Photo

Best Colour Photo must be a single full colour photo that contains imagination, initiative and skill where the use of colour truly enhances the depiction of the subject versus the same photo in black and white. One picture or single subject will be accepted for judging. Any image created or manipulated beyond basic lighting and cropping with computer software is not acceptable. Photo credit must appear in the paper.

Scoring: Presentation (focus, clarity, cropping) (25) Impact (25) Originality & forethought (25) News or Feature Value (25)

Category 25: Best Black and White Photo

Best Black and White Photo must be a single photo that captures the subject in still, action or illusion of movement with imagination, good exposure and composition where the non-use of colour has no bearing on the effectiveness of capturing the subject. One picture or single subject will be accepted for judging. Any image created or manipulated beyond basic lighting and cropping with computer software is not acceptable. Photo credit must appear in the paper.

Scoring: Presentation (focus, clarity, cropping) (25) Impact (25) Originality & forethought (25) News or Feature Value (25)

Category 26: Best Sports Photo

A sports photo must convey emotional impact of the moment to sum up a sports event, displaying foresight and ingenuity on the part of the photographer. Only a single picture or single subject will be accepted for judging. Any image created or manipulated beyond basic lighting and cropping with computer software is not acceptable. Photo credit must appear in the paper.

For the purpose of this competition "sports" will be defined as a physical activity involving disciplined use of muscle groups requiring mental preparations and strategic method and whose outcome is determined by skill, not chance. It occurs in an organized, structured and competitive environment in which a winner is declared. Physical activities

are those activities in which bodily movements are valued; there is reason for making up games and contests where the movements have a central role and are valued in different physical activities. In some physical activities, speed is the feature valued, in others, accuracy; in others, the length of time the movements can be continued, and in others the feeling is the important factor.

Scoring: Presentation (focus, clarity, cropping) (25) Impact (25) Originality & forethought (25) News or Feature Value (25)

Category 27: Best Hard News Photo

Each newspaper entering this category must select a single photo, depicting an event or scene of a hard news occurrence. It must contain emotion, expression of interest, action or illusion of movement, with good exposure, composition and reproduction. One picture or single subject will be accepted for judging. Any image created or manipulated beyond basic lighting and cropping with computer software is not acceptable. Photo credit must appear in the paper.

For the purpose of this competition "Hard news" is news that deals with up-to-the-minute news and events that takes a factual approach: What happened? Who was involved? Where and when did it happen? Why? Hard news differs from routine or soft news, which contain more background information such as feature stories or human-interest stories.

Scoring: Presentation (focus, clarity, cropping) (25) Impact (25) Originality & forethought (25) News or Feature Value (25)

Category 28: Best Feature Photo

A feature photo must contain imagination, initiative and technical skill. One picture of a single subject will be accepted for judging. Any image created or manipulated beyond basic lighting and cropping with computer software is not acceptable. Photo credit must appear in the paper.

For the purpose of this competition "feature photo" has the following definition. A feature photo has no compelling 'news' reason to run, but can illustrate a positive life moment, completely un-staged. Feature photos typically contain an eye-catching subject matter and storytelling qualities that can elicit an emotional response from the viewer

Scoring: Presentation (focus, clarity, cropping) (25) Impact (25) Originality & forethought (25) News or Feature Value (25)

Category 29: Photographer of the Year

Entries must consist of a minimum of three and a maximum of six photographs of different events and times that exhibit the talent of the photographer with a brief outline of each photograph and an explanation of what qualifies the photographer as exceptional. Any image created or manipulated beyond basic lighting and cropping with computer software is not acceptable. Photo credit must appear in the paper.

- Only one entry per person

Scoring: Presentation (focus, clarity, reproduction, cropping) (25) Impact (25) Originality & forethought (25) News or Feature Value (25)