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**YOUNGSTOWN  
PRESS CLUB**

# **NEWS FLASH**

## **Youngstown Press Club News Briefs**

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## **Members' Corner**

### **Honoring Aspiring Journalists**



If you have a teenager in your life, you know this time of year is a busy one. The calendar is full of awards ceremonies, assemblies, end-of-year recognitions and celebrations.

This year, at area high schools, journalism students are being recognized and celebrated for their excellent work in the Youngstown Press Club Scholastic Journalism Awards.

Dozens of high school journalists are being recognized for their writing, photography, broadcasting and publication design and are receiving a total of \$1,300 in cash prizes, thanks to the generous support of press club members and the community.

Now in its second year, the Scholastic Journalism Awards were initiated to recognize the work of high school journalists in the Mahoning and Shenango valleys. In these two years, we discovered that while journalism programs and student media don't all fit the same mold, students and advisers are working hard to fulfill the mission of scholastic journalism: To inform students about what is happening in their school communities, and to develop young journalists' skills.

What impressed our contest judges were the innovative ways these student journalists and their advisers are going about their work – everything from print newspapers to podcasts, video broadcasting and digital news. They are trying new things while learning the basics of reporting, journalism ethics and the fundamentals of newswriting.

The state of journalism curriculum at the high school level is in a fragile state. And student media is going through the same transformation as media worldwide. At the Youngstown Press Club, we are committed to supporting a strong student press and healthy journalism curriculum in area high schools. It's critical to usher in the next generation of journalists.

For the last few weeks, we presented awards, judges' feedback and participation gifts to more than 100 students in 14 schools. And we immediately started on next year's project: Expanding our awards program for 2027 and supporting scholastic journalism in the classroom and school newsroom wherever it's needed.

Diane Fitzpatrick, YPC Executive Director

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## Young Journalists Recognized

Harper Liller, a student at Boardman High School, has won the Youngstown Press Club's 2026 Scholastic Journalist of the Year award and the accompanying \$200 prize.

This is the second consecutive year a Boardman High School student has earned this award. Last year's winner was Lillian Andrews.

Liller was among 101 students and five student news publications from 14 high schools to enter the club's second Scholastic Journalism Awards competition this year. The contest area includes Ashtabula, Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana counties in Ohio and Mercer and Lawrence counties in Pennsylvania.

A panel of press club members judged contest entries and awarded a total of \$1,300 in cash prizes.

The *Steeler Nation News* at Farrell High School won first place and the accompanying \$200 prize for the school in the Best News Publication, Broadcast or Website category.

*The Student Prints* at Struthers High School took second prize, and the *Boardman Bugle* at Boardman High School took third prize in that category.

Winners in other categories were:

\* News Story - Gianna Bonini, Struthers High School, first; Harper Liller, Boardman High School, second; and Jaxson Bell, Landon Primus and Gavin Cindea, Trumbull Career and Technical Center, third.

\* Feature Story - Fallon McCormick, Haylee Tatar and Isabella Sanders, Valley STEM + ME2 Academy, first; Hebah Arida and Tessa Ross, Boardman High School, second; Kierstin Richoz, Maurissa Keeney, Trent Halowell and Keira Fasser, Trumbull Career and Technical Center, third; Mary Ramovs, Boardman High School, honorable mention.

\* Sports Story - James Westover, Grand Valley High School, first; Trynty Nail, Struthers High School, second; and James Mitchell, Boardman High School, third.

\* Editorial, Column or Opinion Piece - Wesley Jones, Struthers High School, first; Aiden Crum, Salem High School, second; Harper Liller, Boardman High School, third; Layla Colich, Sharpsville High School, Madelyn Hanna and Leah Markotan, both of Struthers High School, honorable mention.

\* Review - Mary Ramovs, Boardman High School, first; Delaney Painter, Struthers High School, second; Trent Parker, Warren G. Harding High School, third.

\* Photography - Layla Francisco, Grand Valley High School, first; Piper Currie, Shenango High School, second; Symira Footman, Farrell High School, third.

\* Video Package - Jaxson Bell, Trumbull Career and Technical Center, first; Haylee Tatar and Ariana McCreery, Valley STEM + ME2 Academy, second; Novella Poole, Ursuline High School, third.

\* Layout and Design - Piper Currie, Shenango High School, first; Dane Menough, second, and Elise Bender, third, both of Salem High School.

Stephanie Mickler of Struthers High School took the adviser of the year award, accompanied by a \$200 cash prize and a pizza party for her newsroom.

Contest sponsors were WKBN-TV News, Andrea Wood and Dennis LaRue, the Houck Agency, the Anderson Program in Journalism at Youngstown State University and the Laney Fitzpatrick Family Fund.

By recognizing their excellent work, the Youngstown Press Club seeks to encourage high school students to start on the path to a journalism career. Founded in 1902, the club promotes journalism and related professions in the Mahoning and Shenango valleys.



*Youngstown Press Club Scholastic Journalism Award winners from Boardman High School.*



*Stephanie Mickler*  
*YPC Scholastic Journalism Adviser of the Year*  
*Struthers High School*

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## News Under Threat

"From the front lines of press freedom: The legal threats reshaping the news" will be the topic of a nationally known media and constitutional law attorney who will address the Youngstown Press Club on June 18.

Atty. David Marburger will give the presentation at a noon luncheon at the main branch of the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County, 305 Wick Ave.

Marburger, who was the founding general counsel for the Ohio Coalition for Open Government, has been practicing First Amendment law for more than 40 years.

A retired partner in the national law firm of BakerHostetler, working primarily from its Cleveland office, Marburger has defended media in more than 110 libel suits.

He has also brought lawsuits on behalf of the media to vindicate media rights under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and under state open records and open meeting laws.

Marburger has been representing WFMJ-TV21 for more than two decades and represented *The Vindicator* for more than 20 years. For years, Marburger's clients also included *The Plain Dealer*, *The Pittsburgh Press* and other newspapers.

In "retirement," he still represents news organizations. Before becoming a lawyer for journalists, Marburger was a journalist at KQV all-news radio in Pittsburgh in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He is the co-author of a book about freedom of information in Ohio, titled: "Access with Attitude."

Pre-registration is required to attend this gathering, which is open to the public. The cost is \$30 for Youngstown Press Club members; \$40 for non-members.

Register [here](#).

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## World Press Freedom Day

Youngstown Press Club members observed World Press Freedom Day on May 3 by reading the names of 129 journalists killed last year while practicing their profession.

The sixth annual Mahoning Valley event, which is part of a global recognition, was at the Butler Institute of American Art, 524 Wick Ave. Readers included current and retired journalism and communication professionals as well as students.

The number of journalists killed in 2025 was the highest since 1992 when the Committee to Protect Journalists began tracking these numbers. The previous record was set in 2024, when 103 journalists were killed.

Program sponsors were Covelli Enterprises and Denise and John York and the DeBartolo Corp.

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## Club Spotlight Member Profile

**David Skolnick**, Reporter focusing on politics and Youngstown government, the Tribune Chronicle/The Vindicator

**Hometown:** Austintown, born in Brooklyn and grew up on Staten Island.

**Your job:** For the past 26 years, I've covered local, state and national politics and for the last 21 years, I've covered Youngstown government. My job is to provide perspective and insight into not only what happens or is about to happen, but why.



**How long have you been a YPC member and how have you benefitted?** For two years. I greatly enjoy getting together with former colleagues, some of whom I would never see if not for the Press Club, as well as discussing current journalism topics and better ways to handle coverage.

**What's the best career or journalism/communications advice you ever received and from whom?** During my senior year of college, I worked at The Palladium Times in Oswego, N.Y., where I went to school. My first editor, Larry Wright, told me to never give up on a worthwhile story. If a person won't talk to you, someone else will or there will be documentation somewhere. If you need

to be aggressive and persistent, that's fine. Also, it's fine to inject some humor or something clever into what you write.

**What's your favorite movie?** I usually watch about 400 movies a year so it's not easy to pick one. My favorites constantly change, but right now it's Wild Strawberries, Jules and Jim, McCabe and Mrs. Miller and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. It could change next week.

**If you could have one superpower, what would you choose and why?**

Elise [YPC Executive Director Elise Skolnick, Dave's wife] and I are avid bird watchers and often go to various areas on and near Lake Erie to see different species. Watching them up close at rest is remarkable as is seeing them fly. So flying would be my chosen superpower though Canada geese have that power and often decide walking is better. But I love their attitude.

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## Coming Up...

We have speakers and activities throughout the year. Sign up, register and check back here to learn more.

- June 18: noon, Speaker Event: Lunch with Atty. David Marburger. [Get tickets.](#)
- Aug. 7: Members' Mixer.
- Sept. 23: 5 p.m., Hall of Fame and Awards Dinner, Stambaugh Auditorium.
- Oct. 26: Speaker Event with the Committee for Safe and Secure Elections.
- Nov. 30: 5 p.m., YPC Members' Holiday Party, Avalon Downtown.

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## YPC Mission

The Youngstown Press Club's mission is to support journalists and communicators in the greater Mahoning Valley by:

- Honoring past excellence in journalism and communications through our Hall of Fame, Excellence in Media Award, First Amendment Award and Medal of Merit.
- Supporting working journalists and communicators by championing First Amendment and press freedom causes, and providing speakers and events that help them to hone their craft.
- Investing in the future of journalism and communications by offering scholarships, mentoring and support for student journalists and communicators.

Interested in supporting YPC? Learn about becoming a sponsor or scholarship donor. [Support us.](#)

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Founded in 1902 and re-established in 2018, the Youngstown Press Club promotes journalism and related professions in the Mahoning Valley.

[www.youngstownpressclub.com](http://www.youngstownpressclub.com)

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