FROM JOY TO LEGO
CELEBRATE THE PATHS OF FIVE FORMER WINNERS

LEGO digital marketing manager Janie Sircey runs the LEGO YouTube channel for the U.S., Canada and Latin America. As a high school journalist, Sircey attended the NC Scholastic Media Institute, served as NCSMA’s student president and participated in the Chuck Stone Program before becoming the 2011 North Carolina High School Journalist of the Year (JOY).

“In my career, I have drawn from my time as a student journalist to pinpoint better ways to ask questions, to dig deeper into projects, to take out bias in everyday communication and to look at a situation from all sides,” Sircey said.

For 2018 winner Arabella Saunders, scholastic journalism led her to UNC-Chapel Hill’s Hussman School of Journalism and Media.

“I’ve since reported for publications such as VICE News, HuffPost, INDY Week, North Carolina Health News and more,” she said.

Other winners saw NCSMA’s annual scholastic media Institute as an opportunity to learn more about a future in journalism.

“Being on the campus of Chapel Hill, along with the history and the legacy of journalism that the institution has, that opens just so many doors … I really was just exposed to what it means to tell a story from different perspectives, whether it’s on camera or in print,” Ashleigh Fields, the 2019 winner, said.

Applying to Journalist of the Year allows students to reflect on their work throughout high school.

“[It was] interesting to kind of look back on all the work you’ve done. And it was also an opportunity in building a continued on page 4
As publications advisers, many of us are fortunate to keep students around for three or four years. That makes this time of year bittersweet. Thrilled to be helping with scholarship recommendations, but also sad as we watch them inch ever closer to their departure.

Because students spend so much time there, our journalism classrooms also become second homes: Decorations go up in December. Birthdays are celebrated. Work for other classes collects everywhere.

And because they’re so comfortable in our rooms, the kids will literally say anything. We may as well have #NoFilter signs plastered over the doorway.

That’s how I learned recently that “hitting the slopes” has become a euphemism for a white, powdery substance that has nothing to do with snow skiing. I was heartened that both the student who brought it up and others in that class had no idea about this slang term for drugs – but equally disheartened that someone in this high school senior’s orbit had offered the opportunity so cavalierly.

We talk plenty about how much journalism matters, and covering topics like drug abuse, mental health, eating disorders and more for our student-readers is worth the extra work that comes with tackling those issues.

The topic of drug use hit close to home following an accidental overdose in January that claimed the life of a senior. I found out about the death from my newspaper editors before getting the official email from the principal. Two students shot photos of the impromptu memorial at a park near the school. A new sophomore staff writer volunteered to write about the gathering. She had known the boy who died, and as is so often the case, found the writing process to be cathartic in this time of grief.

As our attention shifted to the quarterly print magazine, the editors wondered about a focus on the drug problem that plagues our idyllic Outer Banks community. But they also worried about hurt feelings. We reached out to the mother about our plans to write about the topic, and she gave her blessing.

That was important. While we try to model ourselves after professional news organizations, the idea that “just because we CAN cover something doesn’t mean we SHOULD” is hugely important in our schools. The fact that the EICs were concerned about how the coverage might be perceived showed just how mature our students can be.

Just as important, though, was the reason the boy’s mom gave. If the articles might inform and educate another student, she was all for it.

The EICs have been in touch with law enforcement for interviews and photo shoots. They’re meeting with the principal, both for quotes and to let him know about this story package and the reasons they’re doing it: We're enforcing for interviews and photo shoots. They’re meeting with the principal, both for quotes and to let him know about this story package and the reasons they’re doing it: We’re operating under prior review, and while our principal is a fantastic ally, we understand he answers to others as well.

The students also are taking a solutions-based approach to the package. Staff members have contributed a number of anecdotes about their recollections of drug education through the years – and ideas on how best to actually teach kids about this most important topic.

Our fall print cover featured a celebration of our football coach celebrating his 50th year on the sidelines. Our winter print cover welcomed back the arts with a shot from the fall musical after two years of missed performances due to the pandemic.

Feel-good stories will flood the pages of this spring edition as well, and the former journalist in me will take a feel-good feature any day of the week. But when the time comes to cover hard news, it’s important that we help our students make the hard decisions that educate and inform an audience that depends on us.
NEWS IN BRIEF

The North Carolina Scholastic Media Association has announced East Chapel Hill High School journalist Caroline Chen as the 2022 Rachel Rivers-Coffey North Carolina High School Journalist of the Year. Chen is the co-editor-in-chief of her school newspaper, Nighthawk News Magazine; and Guo is the editor-in-chief of her school newspaper, The Gator’s Eye. Since 2001, the North Carolina Press Foundation (NCPF) has funded the annual scholarship award in memory of Rachel Rivers-Coffey, former N.C. Press Association president. NCPF will award a $3,000 scholarship to Chen. The three alternates will each receive $1,000. The foundation will also award the winners’ journalism programs. The Journalist of the Year’s program will receive $500. The three alternates’ programs will each receive $250. Chen will now represent the state in the National High School Journalist of the Year competition. The full press release can be found at ncsma.unc.edu/news.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Students will run for six NCSMA offices during the summer Institute. These students should be rising juniors or seniors who are active on their school’s journalism/media staffs and are interested in the improvement of scholastic journalism. Participants in a five-minute speech addressing goals for NCSMA.

NCSMA’s Journalism Education Fellowship Program allows teachers to enroll in a 1-week, graduate-level summer course worth three credits. N.C. journalism teachers and media advisers can qualify for funding and fellowships that are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. The summer 2022 course will be MEJO 602, “Teaching Journalism in the Secondary School.” Dates for the 2022 course are July 10-16. For more information and to access the application, visit ncsma.unc.edu/advisers.

NCSMA offers 12 full-tuition workshop scholarships for the Institute. Read the Summer Institute Guide at ncsma.unc.edu/institute to learn more.

SEEKING NOMINATIONS

Principal of the Year

NCSMA and NCSMAA officers recognize how important a principal’s role is with the annual Principal of the Year Award. The principal is nominated by a journalism teacher or publication adviser at his or her school, and that person provides specific evidence of the principal’s support as outlined in the following criteria:

- The principal has served in that position at the school for a minimum of three years.
- The principal nurtures scholastic journalism principles, especially the First Amendment rights of advisers and students.

For a full list of criteria, view the Summer Institute Guide at ncsma.unc.edu/institute.

Kay Phillips Distinguished Service Award

NCSMA advisers, associates, students or other school officials may nominate individuals for the Kay Phillips Distinguished Service Award. The award was established by the NCSMAA Executive Committee to honor those who have made significant contributions to scholastic journalism in North Carolina and/or to NCSMA. The award is named in honor of Kay Phillips, former director of NCSMA. Each recipient must have contributed at least five years of service to scholastic journalism.

Send nomination letters for both the Principal of the Year and Kay Phillips Distinguished Service Awards by June 1 to: ncsma@unc.edu

Email (to ncsma@unc.edu) by June 1.
INNOVATE

Take a look at some of the best tips and advice from previous North Carolina High School Journalist of the Year winners:

“I would definitely say, be patient and be purposeful, especially with the stories that you pick. Choose the ones that really, you know, speak to you, and that you feel comfortable and interested in investigating.”

Ashleigh Fields, Howard University

“Get involved! Like really involved. I think scholastic journalism is something where you get out as much as you’re willing to put in. It can be challenging, but it’s also so fun and rewarding.”

Arabella Saunders, UNC-Chapel Hill

“Lean into your curiosity, and try to find something that’s, you know, you’re really, you know, sort of invested in or passionate about, to write about, because that’s the thing that will sort of sustain you, in the long run.”

Ari Sen, UC Berkeley

“Get involved in some way with scholastic journalism, even if journalism isn’t their intended career path. The skills I learned in my time as a student journalist, I use every single day in my marketing/production career.”

Janie Sircey, LEGO Digital Marketing Manager for the Americas

“Writing is universal. No matter what profession you ultimately choose, being able to write will propel you forward. So, listen to your newspaper adviser and take each assignment seriously. Even if you don’t have plans to work for The New York Times, there is intrinsic value in knowing how to produce a compelling narrative.”

Lauren Stepp, freelance journalist
Every year, NCSMA offers critique services and a statewide media contest. The critique services give students and staffs the opportunity to distinguish themselves while getting feedback for improvement. This year, overall entries must be submitted online. Newspaper, literary magazine and yearbook staffs may also ship a copy of their publication for showcase at the summer Institute. All individual entries must be submitted online. Please follow directions carefully. NCSMA offers three tiers of publication contests:

**OVERALL**

Overall contests recognize the work of all student media in the state. A flash critique is included with the overall contests.

**FEES:** $75 per publication.

**REQUIRED?** Yes. In order to enter any of NCSMA’s contests, the overall contest materials must be submitted.

**AVAILABLE FOR:** Broadcast news, literary magazine, print news, online news, radio/podcasts and yearbook.

**ENTER BY:** Emailing the “Contest Entry Form” once per publication found at ncsma.unc.edu/contests.

**SECTION**

Section contests distinguish student media components such as design, advertising, etc. The overall fee covers all sections for each publication.

**FEES:** Included in overall contest entry fee.

**REQUIRED?** Yes. Section contests are automatically included when entering overall contests.

**AVAILABLE FOR:** Broadcast/radio/podcast, literary magazine, print news, online news and yearbook.

**ENTER BY:** Submitting your publication to the overall contest found at ncsma.unc.edu/contests.

**INDIVIDUAL**

Individual contests give students the opportunity to showcase their individual talents. Students may choose from more than 50 categories.

**FEES:** $5 per entry.

**REQUIRED?** No. Individual contests are completely optional and not required.

**AVAILABLE FOR:** Broadcast news, literary magazine, print news, online news, radio/podcasts and yearbook.

**ENTER BY:** Submitting the online individual contest form once per publication found at ncsma.unc.edu/contests.

**RECEIVED-BY DEADLINES FOR ALL THREE TIERS ARE**

**MAY 15**

Broadcast news, online news and radio/podcasts.

**JUNE 1**

Newspaper, literary magazine and yearbook.

Ready to enter? Visit ncsma.unc.edu/contests.

**YEARBOOK 2022 INSTRUCTIONS**

The 2022 overall yearbook entry can be a collection of PDFs instead of the entire book. Connect and submit the following into one PDF:

1. Cover
2. Front Endsheet, if used
3. Title Page
4. Opening Spread
5. Division Spreads (2)
6. Two Spreads from each of the following: Sports, Clubs, Academics, Student Life (8)
7. People Spreads (2) – one of students and one of staff
8. Sports or Clubs Spread, with group photos (1)
9. Advertising Spread, if applicable (1)
10. Index Spread (1)
11. Colophon section of spread
12. Closing Spread
13. Spreads of Your Choice (up to 3)

For help with the 2022 contest entry process, contact us at ncsma@unc.edu.

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**Carolina Sports Journalism Camp**

**June 22-24, 2022**

Students are encouraged to apply for the 2022 Carolina Sports Journalism Camp held June 22-24. This workshop will include instructional sessions on sports play-by-play, sports writing, sports photography and much more. Students will be housed on UNC-Chapel Hill’s campus.

Final application deadline is May 1.

Visit hussman.unc.edu/csjc to apply.
NCSMA’s Journalism Education Fellowship Program allows teachers to enroll in a one-week, hybrid-format summer course with tuition funding provided by the association. The course is a three-credit, graduate-level course.

North Carolina journalism teachers and media advisers can qualify for free in-state tuition, lodging and books through this program. The 2022 fellowships, awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, are valued at $1,050.

The summer 2022 course will be MEJO 602, “Teaching Journalism in the Secondary School.” This course will allow hands-on learning as well as exploration of teaching methods.

Priority review date is April 1. Deadline to apply is May 15.

Visit ncsma.unc.edu/advisers to apply.