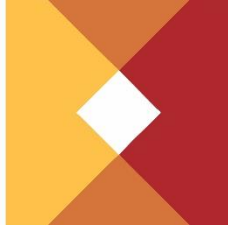


**Coachella
Valley
Journalism
Foundation**



March 2024 Newsletter

Spring is always a busy time in the Coachella Valley, and the same is true for the Coachella Valley Journalism Foundation. We just wrapped up two important fundraising efforts, and we have another exciting event coming up next month. We appreciate your ongoing support of our efforts to celebrate and lift up local journalists.

[The History of Political Cartoons and Newspaper Opinion Pages](#)

They've made us think, laugh, cringe, exasperated!

Now award-winning editorial cartoonist Mike Thompson and Desert Sun Opinion and Engagement Editor Nicky Loomis trace the history of political cartoons and opinion pages in American newspapers and discuss the role they've played in national dialogue through the years.

Thompson is the winner of the 2017 Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for cartooning; a two-time winner of the Society of Professional Journalists' national award for cartooning; and winner of the Overseas Press Club Award, the National Press Foundation Award, the National Headliner Award, the Scripps Howard Award, and the national Women in Communications Clarion Award. He has been a finalist four times for the Pulitzer Prize.

Loomis has been the Desert Sun's Opinion and Engagement Editor since 2022. Her position is funded by the Coachella Valley Journalism Foundation. She has worked as a reporter and columnist for the Pasadena Star News and The Associated Press and has been published in the Los Angeles Review of Books, New York Daily News, and the Los Angeles Times.

The event is from 2-3 p.m. on Tuesday, April 30, at the Rancho Mirage Library, 71-100 CA-111. **Admission is free.**

[Inaugural Coachella Valley Media Hall of Fame event is a great success](#)

A sellout crowd of 200 guests attended the first Coachella Valley Media Hall of Fame event in late February.

The event was a celebration of local journalism and an opportunity to recognize the talented journalists who have contributed so much to our community.

The first inductees into the hall of fame were Karen Devine, Bruce Fessier and Milt and Frank Jones. If you would like to nominate a local media professional for induction into the hall of fame in the future, please send an email to cvjournalismfoundation@gmail.com.

In addition, the winners of the Coachella Valley Journalist of the Year and the Rising Star award, both sponsored by the California News Publishers Association, were announced at the event. Here are the winners:

Rising Star Award

This award honors a journalist under age 30 (or with less than 5 years in the industry) who has worked for a valley media organization for at least a year and produced notable journalism in 2023 that indicates they will be a strong contributor to telling the valley's story in the years to come.

Runner-up: Kendall Balchan of the Palm Springs Post. Balchan was prolific in 2023, writing more than 300 articles or posts on a wide range of topics, from long-term AIDS survivors to intricate negotiations over the future of Desert Regional Medical Center. One of her nominators called Kendall's work "informative and entertaining," adding: "I especially enjoy journalism that covers the happier stories. Kendall's enthusiastic approach brightens my inbox each day."

Winner: Andy Abeyta of the The Desert Sun. From photographs of sports action to wildfires, portraits to drone photography and videography, Abeyta is extremely versatile. Yet amid this versatility is a consistency — drawing out emotion and humanity from even the toughest subjects.

Journalist of the Year Award

This award honors a professional who has demonstrated excellence and high ethical standards in their coverage of issues in the Coachella Valley with journalism that had a significant impact on our community in the past year.

Runner-up: Christopher Damien of The Desert Sun. Damien is recognized for reporting on a particularly difficult subject — deaths in our county jails. In 2022, Damien uncovered a record number of jail deaths in the county and the sheriff's department's illegal failure to report some of them in a timely way. In 2023, that work's impact spread, as the California attorney general launched a civil-rights probe of the sheriff's department. Damien chronicled the human toll by speaking to the victims' families. In some cases, they had never been told their relatives were hospitalized until it was too late. He also reported on the drug problems fueling some of the deaths, including fentanyl being smuggled into jail.

Winner: Rich Tarpenting of Gulf California Broadcasting. When we think of journalism, we often think about reporters or photographers, in-the-field correspondents or news anchors. But behind the scenes are many dedicated editors and managers whose work every day makes the news happen. Tarpenting is the Assignment Manager for Gulf California Broadcasting. He manages the daily newsroom operations and helps plan for short- and long-term news stories for KESQ, KDFX, CBS Local 2 and Telemundo 15. Rich oversees the News Channel 3's I-Team, helping to plan and organize investigative reports. In 2023, those reports included probes into fentanyl deaths, malware attacks on College of the Desert that cost the school over \$1 million, the dismissal of more than 1,700 cases in Riverside County courts, and school safety issues.

Each of the journalism award winners received a cash prize underwritten by the California News Publishers Association.

Check out a cool video of the event provided by retired broadcast journalist Joe Smith and an extensive photo gallery by Taya Gray of The Desert Sun on our website, www.cvjf.org.

[CVJF raises funds for summer internships through Coachella Valley Giving Day](#)

For the second year, CVJF participated in the Coachella Valley Giving Day fundraising campaign, which wrapped up on March 5. Coachella Valley Giving Day is presented by the Desert Community Foundation. More than 150 local nonprofits participated and together raised \$875,000.

CVJF attracted 192 unique donors and raised more than \$17,000. In addition, we received a \$5,000 bonus prize from the sponsors, First Bank and the RAP Foundation, for placing third in generating the most unique donors. Last year, CVJF placed first in that competition and won a \$10,000 prize. While we didn't win this year, we attracted more donors and raised more money.

The funds will allow us to place future journalists as interns with news teams in the Valley.

While the campaign is over, donations are always welcome to help us continue our efforts to support and sustain local journalists. Just go to www.cvjf.org.

Thanks for all your support.

Randy Lovely, Board President
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www.cvjf.org

To donate go to our website and click the donate button using a credit or debit card or send a check to the Coachella Valley Journalism Foundation to PO Box 207, Palm Springs, CA 92263.