



SOCIETY OF
PROFESSIONAL
JOURNALISTS
NORTHERN
CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

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SPJ ANNOUNCES 2010 EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM AWARD WINNERS

CALIFORNIA WATCH GETS TOP AWARD

SAN FRANCISCO— In its 2010 Excellence in Journalism Awards, the Northern California Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists has named as **Journalists of the Year** the staff of **California Watch**, a new statewide reporting initiative that partners with local news organizations to cover education, public safety, health care, the environment and other critically important issues.

Since its launch in 2009, the site, a project of the Berkeley-based **Center for Investigative Reporting**, has helped fill a widening void in watchdog reporting. Under the guidance of California Watch's founder, Louis Freedberg, its editorial director, Mark Katches, and CIR's executive director, Robert Rosenthal, the site has produced a stream of high-impact investigative and explanatory stories on topics ranging from Meg Whitman's ties to Goldman Sachs to high infection rates at a Southern California hospital chain.

This year, the **25th anniversary of the Excellence in Journalism** awards, marks a turning point in Northern California journalism. The society is honoring a number of the winners for meeting the challenges of the online era through innovative newsgathering organizations and collaborations.

Neil Henry, Dean of the UC- Berkeley School of Journalism, receives the Board of Directors' **Distinguished Service** award for his contributions to several important online news ventures over the past year, including his pivotal role in creating the Bay Citizen, a nonprofit news site serving the Bay Area, and the creation and funding of student-staffed news sites serving North Oakland, San Francisco's Mission District and the city of Richmond. The student sites have filled major gaps in local coverage created by newspaper closures and layoffs. At the same time they have provided real-world training for a new generation of multitasking journalists and a laboratory for collaborative experiments.

The late **Franz Schurmann** and his partner of 42 years, **Sandy Close**, receive the **Silver Heart** award, established in 2009 to honor those whose careers reflect an extraordinary dedication to giving voice to the voiceless. Schurmann, a historian and sociologist who died in August, co-founded Pacific News Service, the groundbreaking alternative news source that celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. Close has overseen PNS's evolution into New America Media, the country's first and largest umbrella organization of ethnic news

media, with more than 2,000 partners and collaborations around the world. She has also pioneered a new financial model at a time when media organizations are struggling to figure out how to remain economically viable.

The SPJ NorCal Board of Directors also honors three journalists from traditional media for their many years of outstanding work at Northern California news organizations. The *San Francisco Chronicle's* **Bob Egelko**, one of California's leading reporters on legal and criminal justice issues for nearly four decades, including many years at the Associated Press, receives the **Career Achievement** award for print journalism. KCBS Radio's **Bob Melrose**, whose instantly recognizable voice and succinct news reports have made him a Bay Area institution, receives the **Career Achievement** award for broadcast journalism. And **Trapper Byrne**, the *Chronicle's* deputy metro editor, receives the **Unsung Hero** award for his nearly two decades of skillful behind-the-scenes work in shaping coverage of virtually every important breaking news story in the Bay Area, from the shooting of an unarmed black man by BART police to the San Francisco police lab scandal.

The **Bay Citizen**, an independent news site that has collaborated frequently with the *New York Times* and other news outlets since its launch in May 2010, is recognized in the **Explanatory Journalism** category for a story by **Elizabeth Lesly Stevens** examining the property-tax imbalances that have arisen in San Francisco's wealthiest neighborhoods in the three decades since passage of Proposition 13.

The **Bay Citizen** is honored in two other reporting categories as well. Stevens is recognized in the **Feature Storytelling** category for a series about a con man operating in San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood. And the Bay Citizen takes home the prize in a new special category, **The Environment**, for three pieces on efforts by oil refineries, Pacific Gas & Electric, and the Cargill Corp. to influence environmental and development issues around the Bay.

The **San Francisco Public Press** is honored in the **Explanatory Journalism** category for a series of pieces, published online and in print, about plans to develop San Francisco's Treasure Island. The exhaustively reported package—which exposed the seemingly pipe-dream quality of the project, the political cronyism behind it and the widespread uprooting that the redevelopment will cause—was done on a shoestring budget with funding from Shareable.net and micro-donations via Spot.U.S.

In the **Community Journalism** category, judges reward **NewsWire21.org's** highly collaborative **Ingleside Project**, for more than two dozen stories on education, aging, and other important issues in San Francisco's often overlooked Ingleside neighborhood.

In the category of **Journalism Innovation**, Alameda-based nonprofit **Global Press Institute** is recognized for its unique mission: bringing responsible, investigative news from the developing world to communities throughout the globe by training women from underprivileged, underrepresented communities to become powerful, conscientious journalists. Since 2006, The Press Institute has trained more than 100 women journalists in 23 countries.

In addition to its Journalists of the Year award, **California Watch** is honored in the **Investigative Reporting** category for **G.W. Schulz's** reporting on massive waste in the handling of U.S. homeland security funds.

Other multiple winners for 2010 include **KQED-TV's "Quest"** series in the **Feature Storytelling** and **Multiplatform Journalism** categories and **KQED radio's "California Report"** program for **Investigative Journalism** and **Breaking News**. **Mother Jones** is recognized for its online **breaking news** coverage of the BP oil spill, which included more than 300 articles, blog posts and maps, and also in the **Photojournalism** category for coverage of the gold trade in Congo. **Mac McClelland**, a *Mother Jones* writer who combines a gonzo sensibility with a novelist's flair for description and dialogue, is recognized as the 2010 **Outstanding Emerging Journalist**.

In the **Commentary** category, **Daniel Borenstein**, of the *Contra Costa Times*, is recognized for a series of hard-hitting columns on astronomical county pensions. Borenstein spent countless hours poring over retirement records of county officials. His discoveries led several East Bay public agencies to initiate pension-system reforms.

The **Sacramento Bee's** **Marjie Lundstrom** is recognized in the **Public Interest** category for her series on the death of a foster child in Sacramento.

In the **Feature Storytelling** category, **Matthew Heller** is honored for a reverse David-and-Goliath tale in **California Lawyer** magazine about Dole Foods that upended conventional notions about corporate malfeasance.

The **San Jose Mercury News** is recognized in the **Breaking News** category for its coverage of a deadly plane crash in East Palo Alto and in the **Investigative News** category for a series by reporter **Sean Webby** on the use of force by San Jose police that led to the resignation of the police chief.

SF Weekly also receives two awards. Reporter **Matt Smith** is honored in the special **Economy** category for his investigative piece on how private trade schools, funded by stimulus money, leave students deeply in debt without providing them the skills they need to compete in a rapidly changing global economy. **John Birdsall** is honored for his online reporting about the Bay Area's food scene.

Andrew Stelzer, of **National Radio Project's "Making Contact,"** shares the award for broadcast **Explanatory Journalism** for his piece on citizen efforts to hold police accountable. The **Chronicle's Peter Hartlaub** is recognized in the **Arts & Culture Criticism** category.

LIST OF AWARDS

JOURNALISTS OF THE YEAR: Staff of **California Watch**

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD: Neil Henry, dean, UC-Berkeley School of Journalism

CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: reporters **Bob Egelko** of the *San Francisco Chronicle* (print) and **Bob Melrose** of KCBS radio (broadcast)

SILVER HEART AWARD: Franz Schurmann and Sandy Close, of Pacific News Service/New America Media

UNSUNG HERO AWARD: Trapper Byrne, deputy metro editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*

BREAKING NEWS

PRINT: **San Jose Mercury News** for coverage of an East Palo Alto plane crash that killed three people and destroyed several homes.

ONLINE: **MotherJones.com** for its exemplary coverage of the BP oil spill.

BROADCAST: **John Myers, KQED's "California Report,"** for an overview of the state's ongoing budget crisis and Sacramento's inability to solve it.

SPECIAL CATEGORY: THE ECONOMY

Matt Smith, SF Weekly, for an examination of the failings of private trade-school education.

SPECIAL CATEGORY: THE ENVIRONMENT

Bay Citizen for pieces by Katherine Mieszkowski and Zusha Elinson on the impact of corporate interests on environmental issues in the Bay Area.

EXPLANATORY JOURNALISM

PRINT: **SF Public Press,** for a series of articles and photographs on a proposed \$6 billion residential and commercial redevelopment project on Treasure Island.

ONLINE: **Elizabeth Lesly Stevens, Bay Citizen,** for an examination of property-tax imbalances that have arisen in San Francisco since passage of Proposition 13.

BROADCAST: TIE: **Andrew Stelzer, of National Radio Project's "Making Contact,"** for a look at policing issues in the Bay Area.
AND KQED-TV's "Quest" for a feature on California's energy future.

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

PRINT: **Sean Webby, San Jose Mercury News,** for a series on the use of force by San Jose police.

ONLINE: **G.W. Schulz, California Watch,** for detailing waste of federal homeland security funds.

BROADCAST: **Sasha Khokha, KQED's "California Report,"** for a series looking at the national problem of water quality through the eyes of California families.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Marjie Lundstrom, Sacramento Bee, for an investigative series on the burning death of a 4-year-old foster child at her Sacramento home.

FEATURE STORYTELLING

PRINT: **Matthew Heller, California Lawyer,** for the story of how Dole Foods discovered fraud in a case that drew international headlines.

ONLINE: **Elizabeth Lesly Stevens, Bay Citizen,** for a three-part story on the mysterious man who allegedly bilked millions of dollars from ordinary citizens.

BROADCAST: **KQED-TV** staff for a report on algae as a future biofuel.

COMMENTARY

Daniel Borenstein, Contra Costa Times, for a series of columns exposing astronomical pensions for Contra Costa County public employees.

ARTS & CULTURE CRITICISM

PRINT: **Peter Hartlaub, San Francisco Chronicle,** for three pieces on a variety of topics that demonstrating his eye for the cultural moment and knack for matching tone to subject matter.

ONLINE: **John Birdsall, SFWeekly.com,** for reports on the Bay Area's food scene.

COMMUNITY JOURNALISM

The Ingleside Project, by Newswire21.org, for more than two dozen stories exploring important issues in an often-overlooked San Francisco neighborhood.

JOURNALISM INNOVATION

Alameda-based nonprofit **Global Press Institute** for training local women across the globe to be reporters and providing an outlet to people who don't normally have a voice in their societies.

MULTIPLATFORM JOURNALISM

KQED's QUEST TV for a package on the Farallon Islands that included radio, video and online components.

PHOTOJOURNALISM

Marcus Bleasdale, MotherJones.com, for his photo essay revealing the human cost of gold mining in Congo.

OUTSTANDING EMERGING JOURNALIST

Mac McClelland, Mother Jones, who traveled to Thailand to teach English to a group of Burmese refugees and provided a window onto a little-noticed geopolitical hotspot.

STUDENT SPECIAL PROJECT

TIE: **Emma Cott, U.C. Berkeley School of Journalism**, for exploring the environmental, economic and social costs of a proposed wind farm in Mexico. Her news video aired on PBS TV's "NewsHour with Jim Lehrer."

AND **Sandhya Dirks and Sarah Gonzalez, Mills College**, for their KALW news reporting project "Fault Lines" exploring the root causes of and potential solutions to violence in Oakland.