Southern California News Group journalists earn 49 OC Press Club Excellence in Journalism Awards

ANAHEIM, CALIF. -- July 23, 2021 -- Southern California News Group received a total of 49 OC Press Club Excellence in Journalism Awards.

The awards were announced on Thursday, July 22 in an online ceremony.

There were 50 competitive categories, and SCNG journalists earned awards in categories including Best News Story (First place, Scott Schwebke), Best Investigative Story (First place, Scott Schwebke and Joe Nelson), Best Beat Reporting (First place, Jeff Collins), Best Sports Story (First place, Kyle Goon) among others.

Entertainment and pop culture journalists Peter Larsen and Kelli Skye Fadroski won five of six honors in the Music/Entertainment categories.

The full list of Southern California News Group’s honorees follows.

**Best News Story**
First place: Scott Schwebke
"Even in the #MeToo age, this woman got nowhere trying to fight back against harassment,” Daily Breeze

Third place: Erika Ritchie
"Two investigations underway to find cause of Marine Corps’ deadliest AAV training accident,” OC Register

**Best News Feature Story**
Second place: Erika Ritchie
“A year after Marine disappears on High Sierra hike, family still unsure of what happened,” OC Register

Third place: Scott Schwebke
“After 36 years and a troubled life, transgender veteran finally wins honorable discharge,” LA Daily News

Honorable Mention: Roxana Kopetman
“Vietnamese refugee convicted of murder is free after 23 years, faces possible deportation,” OC Register
**Best Investigative Story**
First place: Scott Schwebke and Joe Nelson
“Embattled Rialto Water District awards contracts to friends of new president,” San Bernardino Sun

**Best Series**
First place: Keith Sharon
“Loud in the Silence” series, OC Register

Second place: Scott Schwebke and Joe Nelson
Series on the Rialto Water District, San Bernardino Sun

**Best Beat Reporting**
First place: Jeff Collins
Housing and real estate, OC Register

Third place: Scott Schwebke
Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office, LA Daily News

Honorable Mention: Deepa Bharath
Religion, OC Register

**Best Public Affairs Story**
First place: Beau Yarbrough
“Is a minimum 664 training hours enough to become a California police officer?” OC Register

Third place: Tony Saavedra
“Spate of deputy misconduct cases casts harsh spotlight on OC Sheriff’s Department,” OC Register

**Best Feature Story**
First place: Jonah Valdez and Ruby Gonzales
“First robbed of freedom by enslavement, then robbed of life by coronavirus,” OC Register

**Best COVID-19 Feature Story**
Second place: Deepa Bharath
“Hospital chaplains fill role of surrogate family members during times of isolation, depression, death,” OC Register

**Best COVID-19 Fallout Story**
Honorable Mention: Susan Christian Goulding
“Voiceless victims of coronavirus: Quarantined nursing homes plagued by stress and loneliness,” OC Register

**Best COVID-19 Investigative Story or Series**
Third place: Ian Wheeler
“Lapses in state coronavirus data cause false plunge in Orange County case rates”
Best Round-Up or Best Of
First place: Brad A. Johnson
“Where to eat in Orange County in 2020: A map of the best places,” OC Register

Third place: Anne Valdespino
“Perfect gift for the pandemic holidays? California’s fanciest chocolates,” OC Register

Best Business Story
First place: Jeff Collins
“Untethered from the office, urban tenants are flocking to the Inland Empire,” OC Register

Best Sports Story
First place: Kyle Goon
“For Lakers support staff, the bubble has been a frantic, collaborative effort,” OC Register

Third place: Richard Dunn
“Neither COVID-19 nor brain cancer can stop Jay Hewitt from completing an Ironman Triathlon,” OC Register

Best Arts/Culture Story
Second place: Roxana Kopetman
“When a Christmas tip leads to a story about family, work and music,” OC Register

Best Music/Entertainment Story
First place: Peter Larsen
“Jimmy Angel’s an 85-year-old teen idol with tales to tell of Pat Boone, a lucky teddy bear and the mob,” OC Register

Second place: Kelli Skye Fadroski
“No Doubt talks ‘Tragic Kingdom’ at 25: The tears, tours and triumphs behind the classic album,” OC Register

Third place: Kelli Skye Fadroski
“Tom Morello talks Chris Cornell, Rage Against the Machine’s first gig ahead of new release,” OC Register

Best Music/Entertainment Review
First place: Peter Larsen
“Patti Smith brings passion and poetry to the LA Phil’s Power To The People! festival,” OC Register

Second place: Kelli Skye Fadroski
“What it was like to see Andrew McMahon perform a concert to socially distanced fans at Drive-In OC,” OC Register

Best Health/Wellness Story
First place: Susan Christian Goulding
“COVID survivors already fight stigma and worry Trump’s diagnosis will make it worse,” OC Register

Second place: Deepa Bharath
“Have coronavirus shutdowns, restrictions spawned a mental health crisis?” OC Register

**Best Food/Restaurant Story**
Third place: Anne Valdespino
“Local chefs are turning to Instagram to sell directly to consumers,” OC Register

**Best Food/Restaurant Review**
First place: Brad A. Johnson
“OC’s Best Places to Eat 2020: And the Restaurant of the Year is…” OC Register

**Best Travel Story**
First place: Jessica Kwong
“Travel: Downtown Miami comes alive for Super Bowl LIV,” OC Register

Second place: Erika Ritchie
“Travel: Mammoth Mountain opens up after coronavirus shutdown,” OC Register

**Best Profile**
First place: Deepa Bharath
“Pastor builds huge TikTok following by sharing passion for chai and spiritual conversation,” OC Register

Second place: Peter Larsen
“Nearly 98, this man shook President Truman’s hand, befriended Dr. Seuss and Stan Lee and hasn’t stopped dancing,” OC Register

Third place: Susan Christian Goulding
“Los Alamitos councilman slammed for racist email in 2009 faces Black colleague in reelection bid,” OC Register

**David McQuay Award for Best Columnist**
Third place: Brad A. Johnson
OC Register

**Marjorie Freeman Award for Best Humorous Story**
First place: Susan Christian Goulding
“Chad and JT’s excellent adventure: Comics make viral video about Surf City’s ‘mask shortage,’” OC Register

**NON-TRADITIONAL or SPECIALTY PUBLICATION**

**Best Arts/Culture Story or Review**
First place: Brad A. Johnson
“Hotel Review: Cara, Los Angeles,” Brad A. Johnson, Food & Travel

**Best Food/Restaurant Story or Review**
First place: Brad A. Johnson
“The Disappearing Art & Rhythm of Chinese Tea in Hong Kong,” Brad A. Johnson, Food & Travel
MULTIMEDIA

Best Use of Data
First place: Brooke Staggs, Ian Wheeler and Alicia Robinson
“How Did Your Neighbor Vote?” OC Register

Best Audience Engagement/Use of Social Media
Second place: Brad A. Johnson

DESIGN/GRAPHICS

Best COVID-19 Graphics
First place: Jeff Goertzen, Kurt Snibbe and Nikie Johnson
Evolution of a Pandemic, OC Register

PHOTOGRAPHY

Best News Photo
Third place: Richard Koehler
Photo of pedestrian killed in hit and run, OC Register

Best Feature Photo
Second place: Brad A. Johnson
Photo of tom yum with fresh water lobster, OC Register

Best Portrait
Third place: Brad A. Johnson
Photo of Chef Susumu li at Sushi li, OC Register

Best Photo Essay or Slideshow
Third place: Brad A. Johnson
Photos of best donuts, OC Register

SPECIAL

The Real O.C. Award
Second place: Brad A. Johnson
“Critic’s Notebook: Why I’m rating restaurants for their COVID-19 response,” OC Register

About the Southern California News Group