HEADLINERS FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES AWARD WINNERS
FOR HIGH-IMPACT TEXAS JOURNALISM

AUSTIN (June 12, 2019) — The Headliners Foundation of Texas announced the winners of its Showcase Award for Enterprise and Innovation. This year’s Showcase Gold Award goes to The Dallas Morning News for its series, "Pain and Profit." Through exhaustive investigation of tens of thousands of documents in reporting that spanned more than a year, the series demonstrates the overwhelming problems caused by the state of Texas’ approach to health care for Medicaid-eligible patients and foster children. While individual stories personalize the issues, the compelling use of data, correlation of documents, and dogged pursuit of public officials are the most substantive elements that define the crisis. The reporting team included J. David McSwane, Andrew Chavez, and Tom Fox.

This is the sixth year for the Showcase Awards, which pays $2,000 for the top prize. The Foundation judged numerous entries, which can be viewed in the Awards section of the Foundation’s website at www.headlinersfoundation.org.

The Foundation also announced four Showcase Silver Award winners ($1,000 to each):

- Reporters Mike Hixenbaugh and Charles Ornstein of the Houston Chronicle, in collaboration with ProPublica, for their work on "Heart Failure," an investigative series on dangerous outcomes and increased deaths for heart patients at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center. The Chronicle sounded the alarm for immediate action, which led to temporary suspension of the heart program, replacement of top surgeons and hospital executives, and federal regulations enacted to protect patient safety.

- Victoria Advocate reporter Jessica Priest, for her investigative report, "Port Politics." The report produced nearly three dozen news stories on former Congressman Blake Farenthold’s hiring as Legislative Liaison at the Calhoun Port Authority. The Advocate’s reporting suggests conflicts of interest among the port chairman and the port board, as well as inappropriate spending of taxpayer funds. A lawsuit filed under the Texas Open Meetings Act by the Advocate challenges Farenthold’s hiring by the elected members of the authority due to lack of advance notice to the public. Farenthold has since resigned his position.

- A team of journalists at the Austin American-Statesman for their investigative series, "Unwatched." The team included Andrea Ball, Eric Dexheimer, Tony Plohetski, Sean Collins Walsh, and Jeremy Schwartz. Through the compilation and analysis of 40,000 day care violations, obtained through public information requests, reporters learned hundreds of operators have been cited for failing to notify parents and the state when children in their care are injured. After reporters began asking questions, the state reinstated efforts
to identify and close illegal and off-the-books day cares, where nearly half of abuse and neglect deaths occur. While children may be as likely to be injured at home or on a school playground as in day care, the chronicling of bad actors and unlicensed operators will ensure a more proactive approach to child safety.

- A team of journalists at KXAN-TV in Austin for its investigative story, "Texas’ Oil Empire: Drilling Into Power, Money and Ethics." The team included Jody Barr, David Barer, Ben Friberg and Josh Hinkle. The story focuses on the financial interests of a Texas Railroad Commissioner and how public records related to mineral and royalty deeds suggest significant oil and gas holdings may overlap with specific votes taken by the Commissioner at the state agency without disclosure of possible conflicts of interest. KXAN-TV staff demonstrated enterprise in journalism through extensive assignments outside the local market to research far-flung public records as well as a balance of on-air presentation with complementary online material.

The Showcase Awards for Enterprise and Innovation in Journalism program is the only statewide competition for Texas-based news media that judges entries across all platforms – digital, broadcast, magazine, and newspaper – on their significant impact on government, public policy or the conduct of a business, nonprofit or other organization. All professional media were eligible to submit entries to the contest, including magazines, web-only publishers, radio outlets and even small, specialized news providers. Interviews with several of this year’s winners will be posted in the coming months on the Foundation’s website.

“We are extremely proud that this respected Headliners Foundation award program puts a spotlight on the great work of Texas journalists and news organizations,” said Board Chair Mark Morrison. “Members of the Headliners Club in Austin started the tradition of supporting excellence in journalism more than 65 years ago. They created the Headliners Foundation in 1983 to formalize and expand their commitment.” The Foundation currently invests well over $100,000 annually in awards, scholarships, grants, and educational programs to encourage strong, independent news media and to educate future journalists in the state, he added.

“Despite the economic and other challenges that institutional media faces, Texas is fortunate to have journalism organizations that continue to make substantial commitment to go beyond the news of the day and provide coverage that protects lives and keep our officials accountable,” said Foundation board member John Lumpkin, noting this year’s winners are examples.

A six-member judging committee of veteran editors and journalism educators made the selections: Committee Chair John Lumpkin, Jean Marie Brown, Nann Goplerud, Kathleen McElroy, Mark Morrison, and Fred Zipp.

Winners of the $6,000 in Showcase Award funds will be honored at the Foundation’s annual Mike Quinn awards luncheon on September 28th at the Headliners Club in Austin.

The Foundation is currently accepting submissions for the 2019 Showcase Awards for Enterprise and Innovation in Journalism. For more information about all 2018 winning entrants and how to submit an entry for consideration for the 2019 award program, please visit the Awards section of the Foundation’s website at www.headlinersfoundation.org.