

# 2026 Awards Competition

## for Outstanding Achievement in Design, Advertising, Editorial and Publishing

**ALL ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY FEBRUARY 6, 2026**

### QUALIFICATION AND COSTS:

Material for all entries must have been published between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025 by active ACP member publications in good standing.

JUDGING WILL OCCUR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE DEADLINE.  
LATE ENTRIES WILL BE REVOKED.

Read the category specific instructions carefully. Some entries require additional information. Incomplete or incorrect entries will be disqualified. Identical submissions that have been republished from the previous year(s) are not eligible.

**YOUR FIRST ENTRIES ARE  
10 FREE**

Up to 10 total entries PER MEMBERSHIP may be submitted for free. Each additional entry will incur a cost of \$5. You will be invoiced for your entries after you submit them.

All entries become the property of ACP and can be used for any purpose including — but not limited to — development of member services.

### WINNERS:

All entries will be judged by a panel of industry professionals with experience in either marketing, design, journalism, photography, sales, media or publishing.

At the discretion of the Judges Panel, certain categories may be merged or omitted based on the quantity or quality of entries submitted.

Award winners will be announced in a virtual session in the spring of 2026.

### READ CAREFULLY

**Contest entries must be submitted electronically.**

### YOU WILL ENTER YOUR ADS AND EDITORIAL ONLINE.

We have made several changes to the categories, so please be sure to read ALL the instructions carefully.

You will provide your entries using an electronic system except for General Excellence and Most Improved. Those categories will be entered with physical copies being sent to the address below.

Visit [www.communitypublishers.com/awards](http://www.communitypublishers.com/awards)

You will be able to access the entry system from there and watch a “how to” video on entering your awards into the new system.

**PLEASE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR EACH CATEGORY CAREFULLY.**

Some categories require accompanying attachments, documentation or explanation. Please refer directly to the specific category instructions for special requirements. Incorrect and/or incomplete entries will be disqualified.

*All entries must be original works published by your company. This includes all writing, photography, page layout, advertising design and any sales collateral. Use of stock illustrations/photographs is allowed unless otherwise specified.*

For questions regarding award entries or the Best of the Best Awards Contest, please contact the ACP office at 877-203-2327.



ACP Awards Competition  
8119 Circuit Rider Path  
Cicero, NY 13039

## CATEGORIES 1-2: OVERALL PUBLICATION

**Limit one  
(1) entry  
per  
category  
unless  
otherwise  
noted.**

Entries will be judged on cover design, presentation of editorial and advertising design, use of photography and illustrations, organization, print quality and overall look and feel.

**1**

### GENERAL EXCELLENCE

#### LIMIT ONE (1) ENTRY IN THIS CATEGORY PER MEMBERSHIP

NOTE: ANYTHING UNPAID – RECIPES, CALENDARS, ETC. ARE CONSIDERED EDITORIAL CONTENT.

- A: Glossy magazine
- B: Publications with 0-15% editorial content
- C: Publications with over 15% editorial content

- ➡ Submit 1 complete issue for each time frame specified below (3 issues total).  
NO ADDITIONAL TEAR SHEETS ARE NECESSARY.

#### PHYSICAL COPIES MUST BE MAILED TO THE ADDRESS BELOW FOR THIS CATEGORY POSTMARKED BY FEBRUARY 6, 2026:

ACP Awards  
8119 Circuit Rider Path  
Cicero, NY 13039

- Issue published during May of 2025
- Issue published during November of 2025
- Issue published at any time during 2025 (your choice)

**2**

### MOST IMPROVED PUBLICATION

- ➡ Submit 2 complete issues. One from before improvements were made and one from after. The “before” issue cannot be more than two years old. The “after” issue must have been published in 2025. Any core or niche publication qualifies. **Please include brief explanation of the changes made.**

#### PHYSICAL COPIES MUST BE MAILED TO THE ADDRESS BELOW FOR THIS CATEGORY POSTMARKED BY FEBRUARY 6, 2026:

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## CATEGORY 3: SALES MATERIAL

**3**

### BEST SALES MATERIAL: RATE CARD, MEDIA KIT OR SALES PRESENTATION

Sales and marketing material used to support your staff and inform clients about your company, products, costs, benefits, etc. Or a complete presentation that led to the acquisition of a new client(s) through a promotion for a specific type of advertising (ie: augmented reality, “Best of”, etc.)

- ➡ Submit 1 copy of your rate card or media kit, or a successful sales presentation that includes as much collateral material as possible.

## CATEGORIES 4-8: SELF-PROMOTION

**Limit three (3) entries per category unless otherwise noted.**

**4**

### **SELF PROMOTION - OWN PUBLICATION**

An ad or series of ads printed ROP in your publication that promote your publication by engaging your readers. Each series of ads relating to the same theme should be considered one entry.

- Submit an ad or a series of ads promoting the use of your publication.  
**Ads must be printed ROP.**

**5**

### **SELF PROMOTION - AWARDS**

Advertisement designed to highlight awards your publication(s) has received. Awards can be from any recognized media association, CVC, Gold Standard, or other similar marks of excellence. Can be ROP or a separate sales flyer.

- Submit an advertisement announcing any accolade(s) you achieved.

**6**

### **SELF PROMOTION - CLASSIFIEDS**

Single (or series of) printed ads aimed at promoting the use of your classified services. Can be ROP or a separate sales flyer.

- Submit a single ad or ad series promoting the use of your classified services.

**7**

### **SELF PROMOTION - OTHER MEDIA**

Advertisement aimed at promoting your publication(s) appearing anywhere outside your publications.

- Submit an advertisement promoting your publication(s) using outside media. A photograph may be uploaded to the system or other files emailed to [cassey@communitypublishers.com](mailto:cassey@communitypublishers.com)

**8**

### **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

In contrast to other self-promotion categories, this shows what your publication is doing for the community.

**If several items relate to the same theme, all items should be considered 1 entry.**

- Submit clippings, statements and other evidence showing the publication's role in serving its community through advertising by aiding or promoting community projects.

## CATEGORIES 9-17: DESIGN & ADVERTISING

**Limit three (3) entries per category unless otherwise noted.**

**9**

### **CONTESTS**

Best use of contests to promote reader engagement, special events, etc. Consideration will be given to its ability to increase readership, drive revenue and/or engage the community.

- Submit a detailed description of a successful promotion utilizing contests. Be specific and include as much analytical support and collateral material as possible.

**10**

### **BEST FRONT PAGE - COVER **CORE PRODUCT ONLY****

Cover design of your core publication. Entries will be judged on overall creativity, appeal, typography and professional appearance.

**A:** Gloss  
**B:** Newsprint with advertising  
**C:** Newsprint without advertising

## CATEGORIES 9-17: DESIGN & ADVERTISING (CONT.)

**Limit three (3) entries per category unless otherwise noted.**

**11**

### **BEST COVER - SPECIAL SECTION**

Cover design appearing on your special section. Any stock or size. Entries will be judged on overall creativity, appeal, typography and professional appearance.

**12**

### **BANNER OR NAMEPLATE**

Top banner or nameplate from your product cover displaying your publication's name. Any stock or size. Entries will be judged on style and other possible unique or creative qualities.

**13**

### **FEATURE ARTICLE LAYOUT**

Entries will be judged on overall appeal, creative use of supporting illustrations and/or photography, typography and organization.

- Submit the full feature article. Please put multiple pages in order.

**A:** Magazine Format

**B:** Newspaper Format

**14**

### **CREATIVE AD HEADLINE OR AD COPY USED IN AN ADVERTISEMENT**

Entries will be judged on creativity, cohesion, effectiveness and overall concept of the headline and body copy.

**15**

### **BEST AD SERIES**

Entries will be judged on unique attributes that show a continued design theme across the series and how the ads relate to one another.

- Submit a series of 3 ads showing continuity of theme or artwork.

**16**

### **BEST USE OF ART / PHOTOGRAPHY SERVICE**

Submit examples of ads showing exceptional use of advertising art from an art service. The category includes ads prepared for an advertiser or your own self-promotion. Copyrighted material is prohibited.

EXAMPLES OF ART SERVICE MAY INCLUDE: METRO, SHUTTERSTOCK, ETC.

**17**

### **SPECIAL IN-PAPER PROMOTION OR SPECIAL SECTION**

We want to see your special products, promotions or niche publications! Specifically, ones aimed at generating revenue from a source other than your core product(s) or normal advertiser group (i.e. Annual Guides, Special Ad section for a specific industry like Home Improvement or Medicine)

- A:** Special in-paper section included on pages within a full run of your publication
- B:** Special section or product insert included separately within a full run of your publication
- C:** Stand-alone special section or publication with complete, partial, or separate section distribution

- Submit 1 complete issue of a special publication or from a special section

## CATEGORIES 18-26: SINGLE ADS

**Limit three (3) entries per category unless otherwise noted.**

Judging for all entries in the Single Ad categories shown on this page will be based on composition, creativity, design, typography, use of color (in applicable sub-categories) and effectiveness of the ad message.

**18**

### **GROCERY & LIQUOR - SINGLE AD**

Single or multi-page ad

**19**

### **FITNESS, FASHION OR BEAUTY - SINGLE AD**

e.g. Salons, Day Spas, Gyms, Clothing Boutiques, etc.

Single or multi-page ad

**20**

### **AUTOMOTIVE SALES OR SERVICE - SINGLE AD**

e.g. Car Dealerships, Repair Garages, Parts Stores, Window Tinting, etc.

Single or multi-page ad

**21**

### **FOOD & DRINK - SINGLE AD**

e.g. Restaurants, Bars, Catering, Pizza Shops, etc.

Single or multi-page ad

**22**

### **MEDICAL, HEALTH & WELLNESS - SINGLE AD**

e.g. Doctors, Dentists, Therapy, Surgeons, etc.

Single or multi-page ad

**23**

### **EVENTS - SINGLE AD**

e.g. Concerts, Festivals, Fairs, Expos, Community Events, etc.

Single or multi-page ad

**24**

### **BEST SINGLE AD - B&W**

(any ads not specified in 18-23)

**A:** Less than 1/4 page

**B:** 1/4 page and greater

**25**

### **BEST SINGLE AD - COLOR**

(any ads not specified in 18-23)

**A:** Less than 1/4 page

**B:** 1/4 page and greater

**26**

### **BEST SINGLE AD - AGENCY DESIGN**

Here's an opportunity for you to recognize your agency clients! Entries will be judged on professional presentation, creativity and overall design. Any size, color or black & white.

**Ads in this category must be designed and prepared by the advertiser or an advertising agency. Please include the agency name for credit with each entry.**

## CATEGORIES 27-32: WRITING & EDITORIAL

**Limit three (3) entries per category unless otherwise noted.**

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING & EDITORIAL CATEGORIES (27-32)

Submit full page entry including all jump pages for the article to be judged. If needed, use arrows to indicate the story you intend the judges to consider.

**Syndicated or wire service stories are not eligible.**

Judging for all entries in the Writing & Editorial categories will be based on originality of content, writing quality and presentation of layout with emphasis on importance to the communities served.

**27**

### COMMUNITY SERVICE ARTICLE

Article should aid or promote community projects that your publication is involved in.

**28**

### BEST ORIGINAL WRITING - NEWS ARTICLE

News articles for current events within a community, such as crime, politics, business development and public policy.

**29**

### BEST ORIGINAL WRITING - FEATURE ARTICLE

Feature articles cover profiles of people, organizations and attractions.

**30**

### BEST ORIGINAL WRITING - SPORTS ARTICLE

Sports articles cover any sports-related topics and/or sporting events, which can include team or individual sports of both youth and adults.

**31**

### BEST ORIGINAL WRITING - OPINION

Opinion writing expresses the writer's opinion about specific events or public policy issues.

**32**

### BEST ORIGINAL WRITING - COLUMN

**A:** Column written to entertain the reader

**B:** Column written to inform or educate the reader

## CATEGORY 33: ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHY

**Limit three (3) entries in this category.**

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR PHOTOGRAPHY CATEGORY (33)

Submit a digital copy of the best original artwork, photo or series for each entry. All entries must be original photographs shot by a member of your staff for exclusive use in your publication.

**Stock or public domain photographs are not eligible.**

Judging for all entries in the Photography category shown on this page will be based on composition, subject matter, style and overall quality.

**33**

### BEST ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Submit photo(s) separately.

Refer to instructions above.

**A:** Used in an advertisement

**B:** Used in an editorial piece

## CATEGORY 34: DIGITAL

Please include the domain name where applicable.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE DIGITAL CATEGORY (34)

Submit a screen capture of the requisite web page.

Judging for all entries will be based on user experience, function and overall presentation of content.

**34**

### BEST USE OF DIGITAL

- Submit details and illustrations of the content (website, mobile app, podcast, social media, etc.) with an explanation of how the content benefited your business, readers, advertisers and or staff. Include any URLs needed to experience the content if available.

## CATEGORY 35: ANDREW E. SHAPIRO AWARD

All cancer related items should be submitted together as 1 entry.

**35**

### CANCER AWARENESS PROMOTION

This special category is supported by the Andrew E. Shapiro Cancer Foundation. Judging will be based on a variety of factors including scope, impact and quality.

- Submit any and all cancer related features, special sections or pages and/or online efforts by your company to promote awareness or fundraising in the fight against cancer. A written summary of your efforts would be helpful.



*Metro Creative Graphics is sponsoring this award and will provide the winner(s) with a special plaque. There is NO ENTRY FEE for this category regardless of your total number of ACP submissions.*

## — 2025 BEST OF SHOW AWARDS —

WINNERS ARE DETERMINED BY TOTAL NUMBER OF WINNING ENTRIES

All members submitting awards entries in any category are automatically entered in this category. NO ADDITIONAL ENTRIES NEEDED. Winners are decided based on the total number of awards won in all categories. The publication earning the most number of points is awarded the Best of Show award.

1st place = 3 points each; 2nd place = 2 points each; 3rd place = 1 point each.

No points are awarded for Honorable Mention recognitions but may be used as a tie breaker.