



**NINA HONORS  
STUDENT  
JOURNALISTS**  
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**NORTHERN ILLINOIS NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION**

**One way to help  
flooded journalists**

In Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, Iowa City and other towns in the flood zone, employees from news organizations have had their homes and personal belongings destroyed or severely damaged by the floods ... all while they covered the devastation for their communities.

The Iowa Newspaper Foundation has established a fund to help these employees. You can send tax-deductible checks to Iowa Media Employees Disaster Relief Fund at Iowa Newspaper Foundation, 319 E. 5th St., Des Moines, IA 50309. Or, donate online at <http://www.inanews.com/relief2.php>.

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# ‘We will figure this out’

*Maybe journalism’s future isn’t so bleak after all*

**By Jim Killam**

At an NIU freshman orientation recently, I talked to an incoming student who said, without question, his passion is sports journalism. But he’s majoring in elementary education because he’s afraid he’d never find a job in journalism.

He does want to work for the Northern Star, so at least there’s a chance. But the conversation got me thinking: As we read news almost every day about newspaper layoffs, we become increasingly gloomy about the state of our industry. We are not a good advertisement. And maybe we’re falling victim to 20<sup>th</sup>-century thinking. People lamented the decline of the horse and buggy, too, but transportation simply evolved into bigger and better means.

NINA and the Chicago Headline Club sponsored a panel discussion June 12 in Chicago, called, “Deadline: Will Newspapers Survive?” One of the thoughts that stuck with me came from Bill Adee, the Chicago Tribune’s assistant managing editor for innovation.

“We’re getting too hung up on newspapers,” Adee said, admitting that the newspaper industry as we have known it probably is dying. Journalism, he added, is not. “People want what journalists do more than ever.”

Now, whether people are willing to pay for what journalists do is a tougher question. The ultimate answer, I’m convinced, will be yes. Figuring out the best business models is the immediate obstacle, and one that, 50 years from now, might be remembered as a speed bump.

It’s difficult to take that kind of an aerial

For video coverage of the June 12 panel discussion, visit our Digital Ink blog and join the conversation:

<http://ninareporter.blogspot.com>

view when we’re living at ground level, grinding through a tough transitional time. That’s no small problem for those of us who teach journalism, either. Sometimes we feel like we’re helping students pack their bags for a train that left two hours ago.

The high-school seniors featured inside this newsletter are going to need some convincing from those of us who practice and teach journalism. The next generation is taking cues from us about whether this still can be a great career. If we don’t first convince ourselves, we can’t evangelize.

In fact, the opportunities could be pretty exciting for bright people who aren’t afraid of the uncertainty. The catch is, would-be journalists are going to have to be creative and make their own breaks. And many of those breaks won’t come in traditional newspapers.

Still, there’s still plenty of room in newspapers for innovative minds. Take Kevin Wendt, an NIU grad who, at age 30, just became editor of the Huntsville (Ala.) Times. The Society for News Design asked him for predictions about the industry. His response: “Just one: We will figure this out. Journalism and newspapers are too important, and there are too many talented people still affiliated with both, for us not

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# NINA honors student journalists

## *Six high-school seniors chosen from strong field*

NINA honored six talented student journalists this spring in its 11th annual Northern Illinois High School Journalist of the Year Scholarship competition.

A total of \$1,800 in scholarships was awarded, including \$1,200 from NINA, \$200 from the Daily Journal of Kankakee, \$200 from The Daily Herald, \$100 from the Kendall County Record Newspapers and \$100 from the Sun-Times News Group.

NINA established the scholarship competition in 1997 to recognize outstanding achievement by high school students in the field of print and/or online journalism. Scholarships are presented to high-school



**Rebecca Kruse of Deerfield High School receives her first-place award from Pete Nenni of the Daily Herald.**

seniors who demonstrate the standards of honesty, integrity, attention to detail, hard work, creativity and an understanding and commitment to quality community journalism.

NINA judges selected this

year's scholarship winners from among 36 applicants from throughout northern Illinois.

"Every year since we've sponsored the scholarship competition it has been difficult for our judges to

select the winners and this year was no exception," said John Etheredge, NINA Scholarship Coordinator.

"The talent of each of our winners was evident in their portfolios. They all share a desire to continue their journalism education at the college level and to one day work in the field. We look forward to the day when we see these talented journalists in our newsrooms," Etheredge said.

NINA and its member newspapers have awarded \$14,900 in scholarships since starting the scholarship competition in 1997.

The scholarship committee extends its thanks to the NINA Board and the Northern Illinois University's Department of Communication Staff for their continued support of the program.



# 1st

### **Rebecca Kruse Deerfield High School, Deerfield**

NINA judges were impressed with the quality of Deerfield's student newspaper, *Deerprints*, where Kruse has served as a reporter and managing editor. They also noted the willingness of Kruse and the *Deerprints* staff to take on controversial issues at the school.

In a letter of recommendation, Martha J. Kuceyeski, a Deerfield counselor, described Kruse as a "quiet leader who is humble about her own achievements. She definitely represents all of the skills and attributes necessary for success in this field, and she would be a credible representative of your organization and its ideals," Kuceyeski wrote.

Buffy Sallee, Kruse's adviser on *Deerprints*, praised her "insatiable

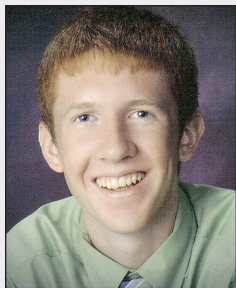
curiosity, sound interpersonal skills and clear writing abilities."

Sallee noted that Kruse's talents as managing editor were tested as the paper covered the deaths of three students in two months, and the school administration's controversial hiring practices.

"She did not shy away from tough interviews or tough questions," Sallee wrote of Kruse.

In her autobiographical essay, Kruse wrote, "I know that I have the drive it takes to succeed in my future career as a print journalist. ... As I have learned from my experiences with *Deerprints*, it is the amount of effort you put into your craft that makes a meaningful finished product."

Kruse plans to continue her journalism education at the University of Missouri, Columbia. She receives \$700 from NINA.



**William Carey**  
Beecher High School, Beecher.

NINA judges chose Carey for a scholarship based on his work over the past three years with the school's student newspaper, The Spectrum, his academic performance, and on recommendations of Beecher faculty members. This past year, Carey served as editor of "The Spectrum."

In her letter of recommendation, Kimberly Cousin, an English/Journalism teacher at Beecher, wrote that Carey has taken the newspaper "to a new level. He switched the layout of the paper from the traditional broadsheet style to that of a magazine format. Furthermore Billy manages to consistently write a monthly editorial that is well balanced and researched. Billy assigned stories with a confidence not often found in teenagers. As editor-in-chief, Billy shows true leadership skills with his sound decisions, especially in the staff's brainstorming sessions."

In his letter of recommendation, Brian Wright, principal at Beecher took note of Carey's "determination to reach beyond the

ordinary."

Wright wrote of Carey, "He continues to push and motivate other students to achieve at his level. His intelligence ranks him as the top student I have known in my 18-year education career."

NINA judges also were impressed to learn that Carey was the winner of a First Amendment essay contest sponsored this year by the Chicago Sun-Times.

In his autobiographical essay, Carey wrote that journalists have a duty to write in an honest and responsible manner.

"Integrity and hard work are two of the key components of a good journalist, and I have worked to incorporate these characteristics in my writing. However, a journalist also has the power to shape society's opinion. I want to be the type of journalist who does not back down, and stands up for his convictions. By continuing to develop my distinct journalistic voice in college, I feel I will be ready to be an effective writer able to make an impact."

Carey receives \$500: \$300 from NINA and \$200 from the Daily Journal of Kankakee.

## 2nd



**Brianna Pitstick**  
Kaneland High School

NINA judges were impressed with Pitstick's work as a reporter, copy editor and editor of Kaneland High School's student newspaper, The Krier.

NINA judges also took note of Pitstick's work as an intern at her local paper, The Elburn Herald.

In a letter of recommendation, Ryan Wells, editor of the Elburn Herald wrote, "I really hope she (Brianna) plans to enter the field, because she easily has a chance to be a difference maker in an organization. She has an incredibly bright future in journalism..."

Pitstick plans to attend Northern Illinois University this fall as a journalism major with a focus on magazine journalism. She receives \$300: \$200 from NINA and \$100 from the Daily Herald.

## 3rd

### Honorable mention winners



**Elizabeth Stickel**, Putnam County High School, Granville. Stickel was chosen in part for her work as a contributing writer to the "Word" section of her local newspaper, the News-Tribune. Stickel plans to attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she will major in news-editorial journalism.



**Sean Leahy**, Fremd High School, Palatine. Leahy's work as editor and writer for Fremd's student newspaper, The Viking Logue, caught the attention of NINA judges. Leahy will major in journalism at the University of Missouri, Columbia. His career goal is to work for a large newspaper or Sports Illustrated. He receives \$100 from the Daily Herald.



**Kaylan Ramella**, Rosary High School, Aurora. Ramella was honored for her work as a staff member and editor of Rosary's yearbook, which won first place honors in a national competition at Columbia University. In addition, Ramella has worked as a teen columnist for the Aurora Beacon-News. Ramella will receive \$100 from the Kendall County Record Newspapers and \$100 from the Beacon-News, through the Sun-Times News Group.

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## ONLINE RESOURCES FOR JOURNALISTS

[www.northernstar.info/nina](http://www.northernstar.info/nina)

## Future

### Continued from cover

to create a sustainable business model that supports what we do.”

As the opinion leaders in our industry have begun to realize, it's time to quit crying in our beer and start reinventing the news business to fit the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Here's a short checklist as our industry searches for new business models. Sure, it's idealistic. But maybe that's the right starting point.

- Get it through our heads that we are not necessarily trying to save newspapers, at least as we know them today. We are trying to help journalism evolve. Whether we're still reading printed newspapers in 20 years is not the point.

- Encourage private ownership. Stockholder-driven journalism is a failed idea. We are not like other industries and we shouldn't be treated like them. Our success or failure helps determine the course of democracy.

- Absent stockholder pressure, reduce profit margins and pay journalists a competitive wage (even those in small towns). For too long, this industry has taken advantage of people who are in it because of passion, not because of money. Well, passion doesn't pay off student loans. As college costs escalate and grads emerge with more and more debt, we will no longer attract the best and brightest on fast-food wages.

- Rethink journalism education. Does it always have to require a four-year degree? Or could intensive two-year programs, paired with real-world experience, train students just as well? Carrying half the student loan debt makes a lower starting salary more palatable.

- Commit to professional training at many levels. Brown-bag lunches. Inexpensive, half-day workshops like the ones NINA provides. In-newsroom training from professionals and educators. Travel opportunities like Poynter and the American Press Institute. Publishers, editors, please understand: In tough economic times,

slashing the training budget is a huge morale killer. Training makes staffers feel valued and rewarded.

- Embrace a smaller footprint. Cover your town better than anyone else. Do not try to cover 40 towns. We've seen good papers accomplish this, and make money, but I just don't think it's the long-term answer. A newspaper that's a hundred miles wide and a half-inch deep will not save journalism.

I think of The Hinsdalean, the paper started by Jim Slonoff and Pam Lannom. It is hyperlocal. It covers one ZIP code, Hinsdale's. It has a tiny staff, it's doing great journalism and it's making money. Imagine that.

- Remember why we're here. Invest most heavily in what's most important: local news. Not entertainment blogs, not food pages or travel pages with information readers could get anywhere. In the most innovative ways possible, show readers what's happening in their community and why it's relevant.

Whatever the technology, citizens always will need convenient access to necessary, reliable local news. If I'm crunched for time, why would I want to read five blogs and try to sift fact from opinion, when I could read one trusted news site or newspaper of record?

- Tell inspiring stories. We do this well on our news pages and Web sites, but we don't do it well in our industry. For the sake of those who come behind us, we need to compile and share success stories of young journalists who have blazed their own trail.

Journalism is anything but a dead-end career. Let's stop treating it like one. Let's embrace the challenges and encourage the best and brightest students in our communities to join us. We need them.



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## CALENDAR

### Friday, Sept. 12

NINA Board meeting. Committees at 9 a.m., full board at 10 a.m. Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.

### Friday, Oct. 24

NINA Fall Conference and Awards Luncheon, NIU-DeKalb.

### Friday, Dec. 5

NINA Board meeting. Committees at 9 a.m., full board at 10 a.m. Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.

### Tuesday, Nov. 4

Election Day

### Thursday, Oct. 23

NINA Board meeting and dinner, Sycamore.