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*675 Nebraska high school journalists and teachers meet at UNL for annual convention*

Some 675 students and teachers from 45 Nebraska high schools and a middle school attended the Nebraska High School Press Association fall convention Oct. 16 on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus to learn journalism and media skills from professionals, college educators and high school advisers.

The convention, co-sponsored with UNL’s College of Journalism and Mass Communications, offers a variety of learning opportunities for students in broadcasting, newspaper (online and print), yearbook and sports communications.

Throughout the day, students could attend 32 sessions on a variety of media-related topics – from using public records in reporting to sports photography.

“The event is a big day for scholastic journalism in the state and gathers together schools big and small from all over Nebraska,” said Michelle Carr Hassler, NHSPA executive director and associate professor of practice of journalism at UNL. “The College of Journalism and Mass Communications and the NHSPA are proud to continue the tradition of offering this exceptional educational experience for the state’s aspiring journalists and communicators.”

The event kicked off with a keynote speech by Matthew Hansen, editor of the Flatwater Free Press, Nebraska’s first statewide nonprofit news source.

During an awards ceremony after the keynote, the organization presented its Distinguished Adviser of the Year Award to Joe Rohacik of Papillion La Vista High School.

The NHSPA also honored Dr. Amanda Gutierrez, a curriculum specialist at Omaha North, with its R. Neale Copple Friend of Journalism Award, which acknowledges those who significantly support scholastic journalism. Gutierrez stepped in as North’s newspaper adviser and journalism teacher last year when the position went unfilled while she was serving as curriculum specialist, which was a new role for her.

The NHSPA also recognized high school student winners in its annual awards competition.

The following high schools won the highest honor – the Cornhusker Award – in the yearbook category: Bellevue East (The Chieftain); Chase County Schools (The Longhorn); Elkhorn (The Antler); Fremont (The Black and Gold); Lexington (The Minuteman); Lincoln Pius X (The Thunderer); Lincoln Southwest (The Talon); Millard North (The Stampede); Millard West (The Prowler); Omaha Benson (The Cupola); Omaha Burke (The Burke Book); Papillion La Vista (The Monarch); Ralston (The Ram); and Yutan (The Chieftain).

Bennington Middle School also won a Cornhusker Award for its yearbook, Out of the Blue.

The following schools won Cornhuskers in the newspaper category: Omaha Marian (The Network); Millard North (The Hoofbeat); Millard South (Common Sense); Millard West (The Catalyst); Omaha Westside (The Lance); Papillion La Vista (The Scepter); Papillion La Vista South (The Legacy); and Scotus Central Catholic (Rock Bottom).

In the online news category, Millard West (The Catalyst) was awarded a Cornhusker.

And in the broadcast category, Millard West (MWHS Wildcat News) received a Cornhusker Award.

A new award – the Cornhusker Hall of Fame Award – was established this year to honor publications that have demonstrated overall excellence and consistent achievement in receiving Cornhusker honors in the NHSPA critique service. The winner of the first Cornhusker Hall of Fame Award is the Millard West Prowler.

During an adviser meeting, the organization elected three new members to the NHSPA executive board: Ginger Eikmeier of Yutan; Chris Johnson of Kearney; and Shelby Schmidt of Omaha Westview. They join board members Brandi Benson, Lincoln Southwest; Erica Brockmoller, Lexington; Jean Brown, Aquinas; Kirsten Gilliland, Omaha Bryan; Rod Henkel, Mead; Mark Hilburn, Millard West; Chris Jenson, Elkhorn; Marsha Kalkowski, Omaha Marian; Diane Schieffer, Elkhorn; David Stevens, Fremont; and Angela Wolfe, Omaha Burke.

Major sponsors of the convention include the Nebraska Broadcasters Association, SNO Sites (School Newspapers Online), Walsworth Yearbooks and Jostens.

The NHSPA is open to all high school instructors of journalism and/or advisers of student publications in the state of Nebraska. For additional information, including how to join, see the NHSPA website: <http://www.nhspaonline.org>