

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NORCAL SPJ CHAPTER ANNOUNCES FIRST AMENDMENT AWARD WINNERS

On March 16, the Society of Professional Journalists Northern California chapter will honor champions of the First Amendment at the 26th Annual James Madison Awards.

For his tireless pursuit of public records, his perseverance in related legal battles, and the award-winning news coverage that he has provided through the information that he has set free, **Tim Crews**, the editor and publisher of the Sacramento Valley Mirror is to receive this year's **Norwin Yoffie Award for Career Achievement**. This award is named for one of the founders of SPJ NorCal's Freedom of Information Committee, who as an editor and publisher of the then-family-owned San Rafael Independent-Journal was a vigorous advocate for transparency and accountability in the public-services sector. Other honorees are:

- **Steve O'Donoghue**, a retired teacher in the Oakland School District and co-founder of the Media Academy, who will be honored with the **Beverly Kees Educator Award**, named for a former SPJ NorCal president who was an educator and nationally recognized journalist.
- Attorney **Duffy Carolan** of **Davis Wright Tremaine LLP**, who will receive the **Legal Counsel** award for her 20 years of representing journalists and news organizations, defending defamation lawsuits, advocating for the release of public records, and protecting journalists against compelled disclosure of unpublished materials.
- Investigative reporter **Peter Byrne**, whose multipart series on the website **Spot.us** outlined how several University of California (UC) Regents approved questionable UC investments in companies in which they had personal financial interests, will be honored with a **Journalist** award.
- **Ashli Briggs** and **Alicia Lewis**, who recovered pages of Sarah Palin's speaking contract with the California State University (CSU) from a campus dumpster in Stanislaus, will share a **Citizen** award.
- The **Associated Press Sacramento Bureau**, which will receive a **News Media** award for a series of articles highlighting secrecy in the conduct of the Legislature.
- Reporter **Amy Standen** of KQED, who will receive a **Journalist** award for her detailed inquiry into the integrity of the compromised scientific findings of California regulators who approved the pesticide methyl iodide.
- **Julia Prodis Sulek** and **Howard Mintz**, of the **San Jose Mercury News**, who will share the **Electronic Access** award for their use of blogs and Twitter to provide compelling, real-time coverage of prominent court cases.

- **Lloyd Chapman** of the **American Small Business League**, who wrested government documents from federal agencies to reveal that billions of dollars in federal contract money designated for small businesses had in fact been diverted to large corporations, is to receive an **Organization** award.

The banquet will be held at the New Delhi Restaurant, 160 Ellis St., in San Francisco, two blocks from the Powell Street BART/MUNI station. A no-host reception at 5:30 p.m. will be followed at 6:30 p.m. by the dinner and awards ceremony. Tickets are \$50 for SPJ members and students, and \$70 for other attendees. Tables and hosting opportunities are also available. Information about how to purchase tickets will be included in a separate announcement.

The James Madison Freedom of Information Awards is named for the creative force behind the First Amendment and honors local journalists, organizations, public officials and private citizens who have fought for public access to government meetings and records and promoted the public's right to know and freedom of expression.

Award winners are selected by SPJ NorCal's Freedom of Information Committee.

Background information, including a complete list and a description of winners, is attached. Additional information is available from committee co-chairs Rebecca Bowe or Mark Conrad, spjnorcalfoi@gmail.com.

2010 JAMES MADISON HONOREES

CAREER ACHIEVEMENT

They say the pen is mightier than the sword, but Sacramento Valley Mirror editor and publisher Tim Crews has found the California Public Records Act to be a rather effective weapon, too. Crews has been involved in more than 20 cases stemming from sunshine requests or uncovering violations of the state's open meetings law. He runs the Mirror out of Willows, a tiny town off Interstate 5 in Glenn County. The investigative journalist has clashed with local government in countless memorable episodes, including one instance where he spent five days in jail for refusing to reveal the identity of a source. His paper ran a series using education board records detailing how a local school official had used taxpayer dollars for vacations and financial deals with friends. Another series, "Who killed Bud?" utilized CPRA records to investigate the killing of a district attorney's brother-in-law, prompting a rare coroner's jury to be convened. Crews' tireless challenges to government secrecy have landed him in hot water with the legal system. The Mirror is currently facing steep legal fees arising out of a court sanction issued after a judge who was a target of one of Crews' exposes ruled a lawsuit he had filed against a public agency was "frivolous." Undeterred, Crews continues fighting, and he has garnered accolades. In 2010, the California Press Association named Crews Newspaper Executive of the Year.

EDUCATOR

Steve O'Donoghue taught for 33 years in Oakland, primarily at Fremont High School. In 1985, he founded the Media Academy at Fremont, which ultimately became a small school unto itself. He has served as an advisor for student yearbook, newspaper and magazine projects, and has taught courses in photography, desktop publishing, and journalism. In 1998, he established the High School Newspaper Support Program for the Bay Area. O'Donoghue has been recognized by numerous awards for his role in sustaining and advancing scholastic journalism.

LEGAL COUNSEL

This year marks Duffy Carolan's 20th year of representing journalists and news organizations, defending defamation lawsuits, advocating for the release of public records and access to court proceedings, protecting journalists against compelled disclosure of unpublished materials, and numerous other matters. As an attorney first with Crosby, Heafy, Roach and May and since 1998 with Davis, Wright & Tremaine, Duffy has represented the Oakland Tribune, the Contra Costa Times, the Associated Press, the San Mateo County Times and many others. Since 2007, Duffy has served pro bono as the lead attorney for the Chauncey Bailey Project. She currently serves on both the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the First Amendment Coalition.

JOURNALIST

Journalist Peter Byrne's multi-part investigative series, "Investor's Club: How the Regents of the University of California Spin Public Funds into Private Profit," employed an exhaustive and

innovative use of the California Public Records Act during an eight-month long investigation that determined that the University of California (UC) had invested billions of dollars into risky private equity funds and companies in which regents in charge of making investment policy (including then-California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger) held significant financial interests. The story was reported from 12,000 pages of public records obtained from UC, the California Public Employees Retirement System, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, and the California Fair Political Practices Commission; one important transactions spreadsheet was made available only after high-level political intervention. Byrne's reporting, alleging conflicts of interest, quickly led to the departure of Regent Richard Blum from the investment committee. The California Senate has ordered an audit of the regents' financial practices. In addition, the regents have stated they intend to appoint a union member to sit on the investment advisory committee that oversees the university's portfolio of more than \$60 billion. The cost of Byrne's \$7,000, eight-month long investigation was covered by 144 people and a consortium of Northern California newsweeklies affiliated with the "crowd funding" journalism website, Spot.us.

CITIZEN

When GOP icon Sarah Palin was invited to speak at California State University (CSU) in Stanislaus, questions arose about how much she would be paid in such a lean budget year marked by furloughs and layoffs. Then when first-amendment advocates filed public-records requests to get the terms of her contract, university administrators denied having any responsive documents. Thanks to the efforts of CSU Stanislaus students, several pages of Palin's speaking contract were uncovered anyhow, through unconventional tactics. Alicia Lewis and Ashli Briggs were among the students who found the discarded documents amidst a pile of shredded paperwork by rummaging through a campus dumpster. Their actions drew national media attention, but also brought consequences. They came under pressure from the campus administration, and Palin herself singled them out for criticism during her speech. Nevertheless, the students say they have no regrets for taking action to ensure that information wasn't kept hidden from the student body and the public.

NEWS MEDIA

The Associated Press, Sacramento Bureau and its four reporters in 2011 shined a bright light on the often secretive way the state legislature conducts business. Reporters Judy Lin, Don Thompson, Juliet Williams and Samantha Young pressed for records and open meetings on an array of state stories. The AP was the only news organization to demand entry into a private lunch called by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger for all 120 lawmakers to solicit ideas to get the state through troubled times. Despite being refused entry, The AP's Lin and Williams kept up stories on the private meeting, eventually prompting the governor to pledge to open future meetings. Young pursued stories on a legislative sex scandal involving a lobbyist by requesting calendars of all 120 lawmakers. Despite being turned down, her efforts to shine a light on the Legislature's ability to set its own rules for disclosure prompted political reporters to ask candidates if they would pledge to open records if elected. Thompson tracked lawmakers' spending on themselves, including a \$5 million perk, unique to California, of taxpayer-provided cars. Lin used the state Public Records Act to uncover the fact that one-third of state lawmakers failed to report gifts from lobbyists or stays at exclusive resorts.

JOURNALIST

Amy Standen of KQED Quest reported a series of stories on radio and print/online chronicling California's scientific consideration of the use of methyl iodide. The central question was how California regulators had come to approve a pesticide that many scientists had cautioned was too dangerous for agricultural use. The trail led from the agency's website to searches of public records—KQED filed a request under California's Public Records Act—that revealed damning evidence about the process, including that state pesticide authorities had acted against the advice of their own staff scientists, as well as a pattern of violations concerning safety measures. Standen's reporting, which required intense and careful scrutiny of scientific studies, led to coverage by other media and was included in testimony concerning the issue. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is reviewing the scientific dispute and also there is a pending lawsuit challenging the scientific basis behind the approval.

ELECTRONIC ACCESS

Julia Prodis Sulek and Howard Mintz of the San Jose Mercury News will share the Electronic Access Award for their use of blogs and Twitter to provide compelling, minute-by-minute coverage of the historic same-sex marriage case and a Los Gatos murder-for-hire trial. Mintz, a longtime legal affairs reporter, kicked off the online effort by launching a daily trial blog of the federal challenge to Proposition 8, which banned same-sex marriage in California. His posts quickly became the go-to source for people following the testimony and arguments in real time, drawing 400,000 page views during the trial. The Mercury News created a special web section that collected news stories, blog posts and trial documents, along with photos. Sulek, a veteran crime reporter, delivered more outstanding online coverage when she won consent from the judge to blog a love-triangle, murder-for-hire case. Using a touch-screen iPad to avoid the distraction of clicking computer keys in the courtroom, she updated testimony as much as 50 times a day during the two-month trial. The coverage included a mix of rapid-fire tweets and Facebook pages about the case. In the end, Sulek and Mintz participated in a panel discussion with the local bench to enhance judicial understanding of real-time media coverage and promote public access to the courts.

ORGANIZATION

Lloyd Chapman, president of the American Small Business League, will be recognized for unflagging work to wrest government documents from federal agencies to expose the diversion of billions of dollars in federal contract money to large corporations at the expense of small businesses. A passionate advocate for the small business community for 20 years, Chapman is founder of the American Small Business League. In 2010, he filed eight lawsuits under the Freedom of Information Act against a wide variety of agencies. So far, three have resulted in the release of documents previously withheld from the public. Over the years, Chapman and ASBL have forced the federal government to remove as many as 600 large businesses from a government database, thus opening more federal dollars to true small business owners.

