

## BetterBNC standardizes online contests

### WNPA pioneers contest technology

Since 2007, when Washington Newspaper Publishers Association became the first press association to go online with its Better Newspaper Contest, more than 45 media groups have adopted the same BNC platform used by WNPA.

In addition to press association contests from across the country, the online platform ([www.betterbnc.com](http://www.betterbnc.com)) is now hosting journalism contests for dozens of Associated Press Bureaus and Society for Professional Journalists chapters.

SmallTownPapers, a WNPA affiliate member and the developer of the BetterBNC, worked closely with WNPA management to build an online version of the newspaper association's traditional tear sheet entry and judging process—the same process used by nearly every press association in the United States and Canada.

“WNPA provided us with the primary understanding of traditional BNC contest rules and processes, which ultimately resulted in a standardized online contest platform,” said Paul Jeffko, president of SmallTownPapers, Inc. “WNPA's guidance has been invaluable in the development process of this platform now being used by news organizations across North America.”

“Saving time has been the number one benefit for us,” said Bill Will, WNPA's executive director. “With our reduced staff, that's exactly what I was looking for when this project started.”

The online contest platform is continuously updated with features and capabilities driven largely by user feedback and requests, including those of WNPA and its member newspapers.

“As SmallTownPapers adds new functions to the site, every year it becomes a more effective tool for us,” said Mae Waldron, WNPA contest administrator.

“With the Judging Results report implemented in 2009, in a single click I can export all the details about the winning entries. Previously, WNPA provided a separate judging form online, then copy-pasted each judges' selections and comments from that form into the contest database, field by field. The report is faster and error free, too.”

Along with the many improvements and efficiencies for contestants and contest administrators, the platform's judging interface speeds the winner-selection process by allowing judges to easily access and review entries from any Internet connection.

“This (online platform) makes the judging a piece of cake. It goes so quickly compared to what we used to do,” said Lake Stevens Journal Publisher Desiree Cahoon. Cahoon used the contest platform to judge Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association's 2010 Better Newspaper Contest.

SmallTownPapers provides the BetterBNC online contest platform to WNPA and member newspapers as part of its annual sponsorship of WNPA activities.