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Contacts: Eva Martinez 415-648-1045

SPJ Names Nicole Sawaya of KALW as Journalist of the Year

San Francisco, October 20, 2005 — KALW general manager Nicole Sawaya was named Journalist of the Year by the Northern California chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists for her important contributions to the diversity and availability of news programming in the Bay Area.

As general manager of KALW-FM, Sawaya created a local news department and beefed up original programming at the station, garnering two national awards for locally produced shows. The station focuses on in-depth feature and investigative reporting on ethnic communities, economic disparities and environmental justice issues at a local level. Despite meager resources, Sawaya has created an impressive new voice to enhance Bay Area journalism and serve democratic exchange.

The prized Public Service Awards went to:

- The Target Bayview Team of CBS 5 Eyewitness News for their extraordinary Bayview-Hunters Point project. By examining the history and wider social and economic context of gang violence, interviewing countless residents about their lives and concerns, and broadcasting live a remarkable civic forum at the Bayview Opera House, the team brought an intensely human dimension to the story of a community plagued by violence.
- Daniel Vasquez and David Yarnold of the San Jose Mercury News for their groundbreaking series of investigative news editorials, which exposed systemic unethical practices by elected leaders and lobbyists in San Jose's City Hall. The series revealed the shocking extent to which money played a longtime and hidden role in governance, and how lobbyists were able to avoid rules requiring them to register and identify themselves as such.

Ellin O'Leary, executive director of Youth Radio, receives this year's honor for Distinguished Service for her commitment to building a project that not only trains budding journalists and teaches them life skills, but also sets an example for all of us in bringing diverse, seldom-heard perspectives onto the air.

Career Achievement went to Ben Bagdikian (print) and Bob MacKenzie (broadcast). Bagdikian was recognized for his six-decade career, during which he served as an editor for the Washington Post during Watergate, the dean of the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism and as an acclaimed author whose work includes an ongoing and influential critique of corporate consolidation in the news media.

MacKenzie was recognized for an impressive news career spanning both newspaper and television over 40 years. At KTVU, he made his mark with memorable feature stories and graceful writing and was instrumental in the development of the popular Segment 2, which provides a longform platform for journalists to tell their stories.

The Unsung Hero Award was bestowed on Penny Duckham, Executive Director of the Media Fellowship Program at the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, for her work in shaping and expanding a program that has educated hundreds of journalists over the years.

The John Gothberg Award for outstanding service to the SPJ chapter went to former board member Bernice Yeung for her tireless work in facilitating the chapter's awards process and in organizing the lively SPJ mixers, which helped to raise the profile of the organization.

The judging committee was chaired by Eva Martinez, executive director of Acción Latina, and Paul Kleyman, editor of Aging Today.

Full List of Winners:

Breaking News

- Therese Poletti, Dean Takahashi, Michelle Quinn, Sam Diaz, Nicole Wong, Mike Langberg, and John Boudreau, San Jose Mercury News, for their comprehensive, multidimensional coverage of Hewlett-Packard's ousting of CEO Carly Fiorina. (daily print, over 100,000)
- Ina Fried and Stephan Shankland, CNET News.com, for their coverage of Apple's June decision to use chips made by Intel instead of IBM. (online)

Depth Reporting

- Vanessa Hua, Christian Berthelsen and Todd Wallack, San Francisco Chronicle, for their incisive reporting on the campaign finance scandal involving a Chinatown political mover and shaker and former Secretary of State Kevin Shelley. (daily print, over 100,000)
- Sean Holstege and Jill Tucker, Oakland Tribune, for their coverage of the multi-billion dollar Bay Bridge earthquake retrofit (daily print, under 100,000)
- Robert Gammon, East Bay Express, for his story on the East Bay freeway sniper, which delved into the California Highway Patrol's flawed investigation of its prime suspect. (non-daily print)
- Holly Kernan, Ben Trefny and Eric Wayne, KALW, for their exemplary radio report on how the post WWII G.I. Bill transformed America. (broadcast)
- John Borland, Mike Yamamoto and Karen Said, CNET news.com, for their groundbreaking analytical series on homeland security. (online)

Feature Writing

- Heidi Benson, San Francisco Chronicle, for her compelling account of famed author Iris Chang's difficult life journey and subsequent suicide (daily print, over 100,000)
- Tad Whitaker, Marin Independent Journal, for his highly original "Marin's Gadflies" profiling a handful of Marin's colorful civic watchdogs. (daily print, under 100,000)
- Lucia Hwang, California Lawyer, for "The rise and Fall of the Trevor Law Group a well-told story about how greedy lawyers can easily abuse the law. (non-daily print)
- Sarah Varney, KQED-FM, for her delightful meditation on Thanksgiving dinner. (broadcast)
- Ina Fried, CNET news.com for "Microsoft meets the hackers," which revealed the edgy confrontation that occurred when Microsoft security honchos invited hackers to a secret meeting. (online)

Opinion

- Will Harper, East Bay Express, for "What Media Monopoly?" a well-researched critique of journalism icon Ben Bagdikian's The New Media Monopoly. (print)

Outstanding Student Journalist

- Keli Dailey, UC Berkeley, whose skill in print, radio, television and photo journalism gives a sense of not just a talented reporter of tomorrow but perhaps the future of journalism.

Outstanding Emerging Journalist

- Alicia Parlette, San Francisco Chronicle, for a 7-part series on her personal battle with cancer in which she exposes the promise and failures of healthcare in America and the resiliency of the human spirit. (daily print, over 100,000)
- Edward Carpenter, The Daily News, for his story documenting neglect and abuse at Woodside Terrace, a senior care facility in Redwood City. (daily print, under 100,000)
- Rachel Swan, East Bay Express, for her a deft ability to dig deep in communities that have not been widely covered. (non-daily print)

Photojournalism

• Jim Gensheimer, San Jose Mercury News, for his photo essay “War Without End,” which clearly illustrates the impact of explosives left behind by American soldiers during the war in Vietnam 30 years ago. (daily print)

In addition to co-chairs Kleyman and Martinez, the judging committee included: Susan Stern, Bernal Beach Productions; Adi Gevins, Real Reality Research; Chul Heo, San Francisco State University BECA; Juan Gonzales, City College of San Francisco Journalism Dept.; Rose Arrieta, El Tecolote; Janet Kornblum, USA Today; Venise Wagner, San Francisco State University Journalism Dept.; Jon Rochmis, City College of San Francisco Journalism Dept.; Katherine Griffin, Yoga Journal; Joyce Slaton, Freelance Journalist; Ted Glasser, Stanford University Journalism Dept.; Brian Shott, Pacific News Service; Randy Alfred, freelance writer; Janet Mandelstam, Freelance writer/editor; Oliver Wang, Freelance writer; Andrew De Vigal, San Francisco State University Journalism Dept.; Rick Rocamora, Freelance Photojournalist; Neil Henry, University of Berkeley School of Journalism; Doris Owyang, Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism; Pueng Vongs, New California Media; and Cristina Azocar, Ph.D., Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism.

Winners will be honored at the SPJ Excellence in Journalism Awards dinner on Tuesday, November 15, 2005, at the Yank Sing Restaurant, One Rincon Center, 101 Spear St. (at Mission), in San Francisco. Cocktails and silent auction begin at 6 PM, dinner at 7 PM, and program to follow. For information on ticket or table purchase, please contact Bill Chiang at 415-706-9971 or by e-mail at qwerty94107@yahoo.com.