

Great News



The spring 2015 staff of *The Independent*, Clark's student newspaper.

Clark College student journalists captured all three top awards in a competition for the best in news reporting, editing and production by teams at 13 community colleges in Oregon and Washington, according to results made public Sunday.

It was the third year in a row that the news staff of The Independent captured the Publications Sweeps, a tally of the most first-, second- and third-place finishes for a school in 21 categories of the competition. The Independent staff also took first in the General Excellence category of the contest, which, this year was sponsored by the Pacific Northwest Association of Journalism Educators.

Former Clark student journalist Emma Fletcher, who is now studying in Dunedin, New Zealand, captured first in the Individual Sweeps, picking up top awards in feature reporting and feature photography, two second-place awards in news reporting and multimedia story-telling and an honorable mention in portrait photography.

“This is such a terrific testimony to the hard work, determination and skill of some fine students and young people,” adviser Dee Anne Finken said. “The Independent staff demonstrated once again that they can achieve great outcomes by way of great effort and dedication.”

Finken said the results were also satisfying because the competition this year was broader than in years past. Washington Community College Journalism Association media advisers opened the contest to two-year schools in Oregon, Montana and Idaho this year and conducted the contest under the banner of the Pacific Northwest Association of Journalism Educators.

“The competition was tougher and larger in number, but Clark students again prevailed,” she said.

The Independent staff finished in front of Mt. Hood Community College students in Gresham, Oregon, who took second in the Publications Sweeps and Shoreline Community College student journalists from Shoreline, Washington, who finished third.

In the General Excellence category, Clark student journalists finished in front of the Pierce College student news staff, from Lakewood, Washington, who took second, and the Shoreline staff, who took third.

Finken acknowledged the success was also due to the support of other faculty and staff at Clark, as well as professionals in the community, especially those who serve on the college’s Student Media Advisory Committee. “The Independent’s success is also because we’ve had thoughtful people supporting a fine

co-curricular program that blends an extra-curricular activity with academics. It's been a great partnership."

Tra Friesen, *The Independent's* editor-in-chief, who won third place in the news photography category, said his work for the publication has been highly rewarding.

"Joining the *Independent* is hands-down the best decision I ever made for my education," Friesen said. "Not only did I improve as a critical thinker and writer, I also learned real world skills like leadership, teamwork, and communication."

As for the team's success, Friesen credited a dedication to constant improvement. "We are never satisfied and we always try to make each issue better than the last."

Sports editor/managing editor Tyler Urke won first place in sports feature reporting and an honorable mention in feature writing.

Multimedia editor Scott Unverzagt, chief photographer Kameron Johnson and design manager Kyle Bliquez also won first-place awards; and sports reporter Becca Robbins captured a second-place in sports news reporting.

Other college news staff who competed were from Everett Community College in Everett, Washington; Linn-Benton Community College in Albany, Oregon; Green River Community College in Auburn, Washington; Edmonds Community College in Lynnwood, Washington; Seattle Central College; Portland Community College; Peninsula College in Port Angeles, Washington; and Whatcom College in Bellingham.

Entries consisted of work students completed during the Spring 2014, Fall 2014 and Winter 2015 terms.

Eighteen judges—professional and former staff members from *The Seattle Times*, *The (Tacoma) News Tribune*, the *Tacoma Weekly*, the *Wenatchee World* and the (Longview) *Daily News*; and faculty

and advisers from non-participating colleges—evaluated and scored the submissions, Finken said.