**Designer of the Year Comments – Judge Sarah Nichols**

**Winner/First Place:**

Rebecca Wadsworth (Brighton H.S.)

Outstanding designs. Each work sample made great use of typography. Layouts reflect intentional photo placement to help direct eyeflow. Excellent packaging and use of small photos for contrast. The designs show attention to detail and layering of unifying elements, but plenty of variety exists from one spread to the next in order to keep storytelling as the focus. Good use of small, medium and larger elements. Effective use of text wrap and cutouts. While building a website portfolio was not required, the professional presentation here was fantastic.

**Second Place:**

Athena Taylor (Chaparral H.S.)

Fantastic body of work presented. Each design has strong visual impact. Small special touches such as the pop-out cutout hands on the spring play spread incorporate trends and provide a "wow" factor. The small icons such as on the “how to donate” sidebar are clean and effective. It's great to see engaging designs of all types from spreads with many photos and in all sizes (such as basketball) to layouts using one large image (like the Laila Z feature). It was interesting to see that not all of the yearbook spreads submitted had a page folio. Reader services like these can be simple and small but should always be present.

**Third Place:**

India Turner (Monarch H.S.)

Eye-catching work! Strong variety in work submitted, all with a very student-friendly approach. Each design had an obvious plan or theme to support and enhance the story without being distracting. The visual presentation added to the story and increased reader interest with creative yet natural visual ties to content. The ILC design was especially strong with the unifying graphic element and polished overall effect. Great job creating contrast with color, size and type. Make sure text columns aren't too wide; for example, body copy for the "cracks in the system" story (p. 24-25) is hard to read running so far across the page.

**Honorable Mention:**

Ella Srholez (Eagle Valley H.S.)

Creative, teen-friendly ideas. Awesome infographic on how to vote. This portfolio had the best variety in types of work submitted. It's great to see multiple entry points — just make sure a strong center of interest anchors each design. The size and placement of elements should help direct readers. Make sure to pay attention to hyphenated words and zoom in to double-check alignment. Lots of promise here with creative illustration.

**Overall contest feedback:**

Solid portfolios from all candidates. It was fantastic to see 10 entirely different styles from these designers. The best designs had a strong center of visual interest and demonstrated fresh ideas. It's okay to draw from professional inspirations indirectly, but a design portfolio should reflect original work, not magazine imitations or layouts created using company templates. Each example in a portfolio should show a unique style, technique or story form to offer as much variety as possible. Typography is such an important consideration in every design; treat it as a graphic element. Apply a sense of scale or hierarchy and don't forget details like hyphenation, widows and orphans. Each designer did a nice job working with color. Cool to see trends incorporated effectively, such as hand-drawn elements, icons, illustration and cutout backgrounds. Photo direction leading into/onto the design is critical. Invite readers toward the other content. Infographics should have a source. In a professional contest like this one, submitting an error-free statement for each design in the portfolio is important. Wonderful to see strong work from younger students, too — by this time next year, wow!