**Colorado Student Media Association**

**2020 Reporter of the Year**

**FIRST PLACE**

**Kira Zizzo, Rock Canyon High School**

Kira shows herself to be a master storyteller across media platforms. Her complementary stories about the human rights club at Rock Canyon uses human experience and powerful imagery to draw us into the stories. Her spur-of-the-moment scramble to capture breaking news at the school’s graduation ceremony featured both great photography and precise reporting, and it captures the essence of protest without being preachy or maudlin. She also shows us two excellent sports photo essays, and a Coronavirus op-ed that does more than just opine. It balances deep research with clear writing that also tickles the ear. I look forward to seeing Kira’s work in professional media sooner than later.

**SECOND PLACE**

**Grayson Blaylock, Erie High School**

Grayson is a talented writer and broadcast reporter. I would encourage everyone to read his piece “Lost Season” about the heartbreak Erie athletes had to endure this spring as their seasons — and often their final high school athletic ambitions — were abruptly canceled. What a great story. Thorough. In-depth. Literally dozens of sources. Strong writing. Pace. Vocabulary. Narrative with carefully selected quotes. This is the story of every high school this spring, but it’s more specifically the story of every single one of those athletes mentioned. This is a showcase. The descriptive writing takes us to Erie, to those spring days pre-COVID.

**THIRD PLACE**

**India Turner, Monarch High School**

India and her team at Monarch produce some strong stories worthy of mention. It is difficult, however, to determine how much of India we’re reading and how much of her peers we’re reading. Great work, nonetheless.

**GENERAL COMMENTS**

**The Good**

I was generally impressed by the level of writing by the students. Their grasp of the language and of journalistic style was laudable. They also were fearless about choosing stories to report on and approaching sources about getting them on the record. That’s at the heart of good reporting — knowing the value of a story and how hard one must work to collect all that’s needed to tell a compelling and convincing story. The best entries also displayed a grasp of how various media work and how audiences encounter a video story versus a written story, a series of social media posts versus a yearbook informational graphic or alternative story form.

**The Other**

Please understand that the single-source story may yield some good quotes, but that reporting requires so much more. If you choose to tackle a difficult subject, your responsibility for finding reliable information from credible sources rises greatly. Think of a 5-to-1 ratio — for every one hour you plan to take to write a story, you’re going to spend at least five hours trying to uncover important information.

All in all, I’m proud to have called Colorado my home for 23 years, and I’m happy to report that the state of scholastic journalism in the Centennial State is still strong, at least based on what I’ve read in reviewing these contest entries.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Browne

Executive Director

Quill and Scroll Honor Society