Madison Olsen, McCallum High School (Austin, Texas), 2018 Photojournalist of the Year portfolio (newspaper)

For the last three years of high school I have contributed 110 percent of my time, energy and love to the journalism department at McCallum, but my origin story as a journalist began with a mistake. The first day of my sophomore year, I discovered my schedule was mixed up, leaving me standing with one eyebrow raised in front of the journalism room. Photojournalism was not on my course request list, but I decided to stick it out.

As a shy sophomore, interviewing strangers and writing thought-provoking articles seemed nerve-wracking, and becoming a high school journalist appeared to be way out of reach. I was a photographer, not a writer, and I didn't think I could suddenly pretend to know how to do something I had struggled with in the past. I still wasn't sure I even wanted to be in this class, but as I watched the publication staffers work, I began to notice that, despite considerable differences, they all shared one thing in common—they continuously made sacrifices to be a part of something bigger than themselves. Every day they came prepared to get the job done. Their dedication to their publication, to each other, and to the good name of MacJournalism inspired me to join them.

My junior year, I enthusiastically joined both newspaper and yearbook, no idea what I was getting into. Taking on so much responsibility all at once ate most of my time, and I started to fall behind on my publication assignments and my school work. But as I began to consider scaling back and limiting my involvement, I realized it was impossible for me to choose between yearbook and newspaper. I felt like a mother who was forced to choose between her children; I knew I could not sacrifice either part of myself.

I was not the only staffer who struggled with the time-consuming responsibility of MacJournalism. The work nights lasted until 1 a.m. and the crack-of-dawn Saturday mornings added up. Many times, when the computers were malfunctioning again, our perseverance wavered. Remarkably, we always emerged stronger. Even at 2 a.m., functioning only by the grace of coffee and adrenaline, being a part of the journalism family has enriched every second of my high school experience, and although it is a continual uphill battle, I feel lucky to be surrounded by this amazing group of people.

Senior year I was the photo editor for the yearbook *and* the newspaper, and the managing editor of the yearbook. I am the only student who is on both publications. I have embraced the nickname "that camera girl," but I have also become that staffer that writes an article three pages over the limit. In journalism, I've learned more than just *InDesign* and writing. I have been forced to go outside my comfort zone and take risks I did not know I needed to take. I gained something I thought I already had—an open mind. Journalism gave me a chance to learn from people with different political views, social backgrounds and life experiences. I learned how to accept other people's opinions.

In middle school, I thought newspaper was dorky, and even though many people still think it is, I loved every minute of it. It took me a while to find myself at McCallum, but I found my passion, my family and myself in the journalism room. I am eternally grateful to the computer glitch that messed up my schedule. It has led me to the life in front of me right now.

I feel like both the yearbook and the newspaper staffs at McCallum have done spectacularly well this year. This year in newspaper, thanks to the hard work of the staff, we have kept up a super amazing web streak comparable to our famous Instagram. And speaking of the Instagram, our follower count almost doubled because of our amazing coverage this year. I loved the ins and outs of being the photo editor. I accomplished the backpage photo essays each issue of the paper, help run the Instagram and manage the other photographers to ensure every school event is covered.

Newspaper Photos:

- 1. Gun Control Walkout: One of the proudest moments of my career this school year, covering the Columbine anniversary walkout on April 20 was the experience of a lifetime. I had the ability to document, photograph and interview students with incredible stories from across the city and create work like this image, which really reflects the intensity of the passion for social justice burning in the hearts and minds of these students. To see design and caption, click <u>here</u>.
- 2. March for Our Lives: Capturing this embrace, the split second of time that held so much significance in his fight and in the movement as a whole, was captured in this moment. To see design and caption, click <u>here</u>.
- 3. Cheerleaders kneeling: Earlier this year there was a national movement sparked by controversy in the NFL, the cheerleaders at McCallum decided to join the protest and kneel during the national anthem of the football game. This photo, which shows a few of the cheerleaders that did chose to kneel, and some who did not, was a significant demonstration and a brave risk for these students to stand up for what their beliefs. To see design and caption, click here. To see design and caption, click here.
- 4. HOPE Gallery: A culturally and artistically significant gallery in Austin, nicknamed "Graffiti Hill" was scheduled to be torn down earlier this year, so I headed to the outdoor street art gallery to capture just what made this tourist favorite so impactful among the art community. After interviewing musicians, street artists, locals, poets, tourist, photographers (just to name a few), I compiled a photo essay that captured their experience at the gallery and how they either shared their art form in the park or took inspiration from other talent that surrounded them. To see design and caption, click <u>here</u>.
- 5. Pink Week: Every year, I cover pink and support the PALs in their fight for breast cancer awareness and fundraising, which they bring about by doing a "PALlery," which is where students can donate to throw water balloons at PALs. This fun-filled event never fails to be an awesome photoshoot, although sometimes keeping your camera dry is half the challenge! To see design and caption, click here.









