

Multimedia Journalist of the Year Statement - Austin Ikard

Ever since I started high school, I have been captivated by working with multimedia on the Dispatch staff. I first learned from my fellow editors in my early years how to make high-quality multimedia content, but I truly took it upon myself to continue to improve my work ethic and content to the highest level. Reading a story with just some text and images has always been the basic way to view a journalism piece. My partners and I knew we wanted to elevate this and take it to the next level of full-coverage journalism. We did this by adding compelling videos, informative podcasts, and insightful photo galleries to countless stories, which significantly strengthened our coverage. My experiences have not only enhanced my multimedia capabilities but also advanced my appreciation for the symbiotic relationship between stories, photography, and videography in maintaining journalistic integrity.

This past year, I was given the name co-editor-in-chief of the Dispatch online edition, a role that put me in charge of managing our website, social media accounts, and other online staff. In taking on this responsibility, I learned so much about leadership, gaining compelling friendships, and improving my overall confidence. I also challenged myself to take a step out of my comfort zone to work with some truly amazing people and document their accomplishments through multimedia creation. I loved this because it allowed me to put my video skills to the test and learn invaluable lessons that notably contributed to my growth as a student journalist.

My favorite part this year was working with the online staff to teach them my skills, as I knew how important it was to teach them to keep the program going as well as it was. I did this by helping them find their niche and work hard toward their assignment. It was very compelling to see them find something they enjoyed doing and continue to elevate throughout the year. While working every day on our products for the paper, we learned how to engage our audience, promote our content, and help other people get interested in the same type of creation. Our favorite way to accomplish this was by making sports hype videos. Just this year, we made over 30 hype videos for several programs at my high school. Also, this year, in particular, our program produced three times as many videos as we did in the 22–23 school year, as well as receiving an ILPC gold star for our online and print editions. The accumulation of print and online products was a big step forward for our program. I can proudly say that I was the pioneer of this progress and helped lead and take a role in every single video, podcast, and photo gallery that was published this year.

I'm incredibly proud of my journey because I know my videos made a significant impact on those who watched them. Teachers and students frequently approached me to express how much they loved the videos and even requested personal projects, like personal sports mixtapes for college applications. Over six issues of our online products, I earned 24 individual awards. My work was recognized with multiple accolades from the SIPA Visual contests, the TAJE Best in Texas contest, the NSPA Clips and Clicks contest, and the Best of SNO Story Awards. Additionally, I received the JEA National Student Media Contest's Online News Package Superior Rating (1st place) (Fourth Superior Award in School History), and the All-State Journalism Staff Award. None of this would have been possible without the collaboration of my wonderful classmates and advisor who I will forever be thankful for.

Submission 1: [Boston floral designers help a community bloom](#)

This story and video were part of a national competition in Boston, Massachusetts, which I attended with another co-editor-in-chief of the Dispatch online edition. The video was particularly special because we didn't know what to expect in terms of preparation. At the beginning of the day, we were tasked with documenting a floral design show happening in the mall and given about 7 hours to complete it. All we had was a tripod, a wired microphone, and a video camera. Despite the competition's team limit being 3 members, Alex Edwards and I ended up winning first place.

Submission 2: [New 87 foot mural brightens Fine Arts Building](#)

This story and video delved deep into a newly added mural on our campus. We had the chance to interview the founder of the company behind the design and tour his studio. We gained insight into his creative process and explored other projects he's worked on in the past. Finally, we interviewed one of the committee members from our school who collaborated on the mural's creation, discussing how they coordinated the project.

Submission 3: [Junior jumps into the world of music](#)

The process of creating this video was really meaningful to me. It involved finding a great spot to film the interview and capture footage of him playing the guitar. After completing the video, the artist and I continued to collaborate on his music journey. We met up multiple times for photoshoots to promote his debut single. I also created some awesome music videos for him and designed the cover art for his song. Through this experience, we formed a strong connection and friendship.

Submission 4: [The Dawgs take the win against Anderson](#)

This perfectly illustrates what I loved doing with the hype videos I made over the years. We would take pictures and videos at the game and collaborate with print review editors to create a story package that included text, photos, and a video. We enjoyed starting the year with these weekend sports reviews. It was a great way for us to post a video on our social media platforms and then link to a written review of the game.

Submission 5: [Diving into fear at the House of Torment](#)

This was our first visit to the House of Torment in Austin, Texas, where we documented the behind-the-scenes process of creating a haunted house and interviewed some fascinating individuals, such as one of their scare actors. We were granted complimentary access to the haunted house and special permission to film inside. Additionally, we revisited their Valentine's Day-themed haunted house, which we also reported on. The House of Torment quickly became a favorite destination for the Dispatch team, and we sincerely hope that new leadership will have the opportunity to carry on our tradition of visiting and filming with them.