



Two Top Prizes for Localore: Finding America at ONA 2017

Boston, MA: The Online News Association (ONA) recognized two small public radio newsrooms for excellence in reporting for work produced with AIR (Association of Independents in Radio) through its *Localore: Finding America* initiative. The awards were announced in Washington, D.C., on October 7, at a ceremony hosted by Joshua Johnson, host of WAMU's daily *1A* talk show.

First prize in the Topical Reporting, Small Newsroom category went to *TruckBeat*, out of public radio station WUOT in Knoxville, TN. The team was led by independent producer Jess Mador who worked closely with station news director Matt Shafer Powell. Over nine months on the ground, they built new ties to Appalachian communities and produced multimedia stories that captured the reality of health disparities in rural and urban East Tennessee. Their reporting explored what Charlene Hipsher from the Roane County District Attorney General's Office calls, "an epidemic to opiates that has affected just about every living room in this community, very much like it has across our entire nation." Shafer Powell has since moved from Knoxville to Indianapolis to take up the chief content manager position at WFYI. And Mador is now a managing editor at WYSO in Yellow Springs, OH.

Announcing the award for *TruckBeat*, Joshua Johnson said, "At a time when many Americans do not feel like the media is listening to them, the judges said they were impressed by this crowdsourced project that runs counter to that notion."

KNBA's *Frontier of Change* out of Anchorage, AK, was created by independent producers Isaac Kestenbaum and Josie Holtzman. They were among the winners in a new prize category created to "recognize the innovative and explosive growth of audio and immersive digital audio storytelling." Johnson, in announcing the award, said, "The judges loved the winning entry's combination of on-the-ground engagement with the community, with powerful digital elements that brought the package to life." KNBA, the flagship station of the Koahnic Broadcast Corporation network of Native reservation stations, incubated the production. KNBA News Director Joaqlin Estus (Tlingit) advised the production and guided the team's treks to the far reaches of Alaska, where they connected with people adapting to the impact of climate change on their subsistence traditions.

Newsrooms from the *Globe and Mail*, BBC, and the *New York Times* were among those recognized, along with public media outlet Frontline for *After Solitary*, and WBUR for *Election 2016*. Inside Energy, a local journalism collaboration supported by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), won for *Standing Rock and Beyond*. AIR New Voice 2016 Jenni Monet (Laguna Pueblo) contributed to that reporting.

"CPB continues to support and expand public media's local journalism capabilities," said Patricia Harrison, president and CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. "AIR's Localore project connects to communities that are often underserved, and we are pleased to see their work recognized."

In addition to CPB, principal and ongoing support for Localore comes from the Wyncote Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Localore: Finding America is a national production first created by AIR in 2008 to tap intrepid independent producers and embed them at public radio and television stations for up to a year. The teams represent new and inspiring collaborative productions formed between public radio journalists, indie producers and filmmakers, and people living and working in the "far corners" of local communities where public media seeks to deepen its service. The iterative models and best practices surfaced by the more than 400 storytakers involved in Localore so far are most recently captured in a new report, "Break Form, Making Stories with and for the People," available at AIRmedia.org.

AIR's growing network of mission-focused talent is integral to public broadcasting and America's growing podcasting and streaming audio industry. The 1,300 journalists, podcasters, documentarians, technicians, and media entrepreneurs forming AIR's creative community span 46 states and 30 countries worldwide. AIR's programs and productions enrich and expand the ecosystem where storytakers create work that brings hope and enlightenment, with the power to embolden and unify.

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Links:

Watch livestream ceremony: <https://awards.journalists.org/live/> (@ 1:10:08 and 1:24:35)

Watch and listen to more stories at <http://findingamerica.airmedia.org/>

Find out about AIR's programs and network: <http://AIRmedia.org>

TruckBeat stories: <https://findingamerica.airmedia.org/15-communities/truckbeat/>