



## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS THE TOM AND PAT GISH AWARD

The Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues seeks nominations by Oct. 31, 2013, for this year's Tom and Pat Gish Award for courage, tenacity and integrity in rural journalism.

The award is named for Tom and Pat Gish, *right*, who published *The Mountain Eagle* in Whitesburg, Ky., for more than 51 years. Tom died in 2008; Pat has health issues but remains publisher, and their son Ben is editor. The Gishes have withstood advertiser boycotts, business competition, declining population, personal attacks, and even the burning of their office to give their readers the kind of journalism often lacking in rural areas. The family won the 2010 Eugene Cervi Award from the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors, which honors the maxim "good journalism begets good government," and Tom and Pat Gish were the first winners of the award named for them.



Other winners of the Gish award have been the Ezzell family of *The Canadian (Tex.) Record*, *left*, in 2007; James E. Prince III and Stanley Dearman, *right*, current and former publishers of *The Neshoba Democrat* of Philadelphia, Miss., in 2008; Samantha Swindler, *lower right*, editor and publisher of the *Headlight Herald* in Tillamook, Ore., in 2010 for her work as editor of the *Corbin, Ky., Times-Tribune* and managing editor of the *Jacksonville (Tex.) Daily Progress*; in 2011, Stanley Nelson and the *Concordia Sentinel* of Ferriday, La.; and in 2012, Jonathan and Susan Austin of the *Yancey County News* in Burnsville, N.C. All have shown courage, tenacity and integrity in pursuing difficult stories.



Laurie Ezzell Brown (*with her mother, Nan Ezzell*) has continued the courageous journalism of her father Ben Ezzell, who established the *Record's* reputation for gutsy editorials, especially in national political controversies; the weekly paper continues to go against the local political grain, and to do investigative journalism about politicians and corporations.

The weekly *Neshoba Democrat* was recognized for its leadership, especially on civil rights and reconciliation over the last four decades, highlighted by the publishers' efforts to bring to justice all the killers of three civil-rights workers who were murdered in Neshoba County in July 1964.

At two small dailies, Swindler did stories on local corruption, and the latter package, done despite threats to her personal safety and that of her reporter, was key to the indictment and imprisonment of the local sheriff.

Nelson, *right*, investigated an unsolved murder from the civil-rights era, writing a series of stories despite objections from some readers, and named and interviewed a living suspect.

The Austins, *below*, showed courage in starting a second newspaper in a one-newspaper town, in January 2011, then demonstrated courage, tenacity and integrity by reporting on local corruption.



The weekly reported in its first edition about a state investigation of vote-fraud allegations, then analyzed records obtained from investigators to report that the county had an unusually high number of absentee ballots, many of which were witnessed by employees of the county sheriff's department and cast by criminal defendants, some of whose charges were soon dropped. The paper revealed that the county's chief deputy, the arresting officer in several cases in which the suspects immediately voted and were given leniency, was also pawning county-owned guns for personal gain. He has resigned and pleaded guilty to failing to discharge his duties. The vote-fraud investigation continues.

The Institute seeks nominations that measure up, at least in major respects, to the records of previous winners. Nominators should send detailed letters to Director Al Cross, explaining how their nominees show the kind of exemplary courage, tenacity and integrity that the Gishes demonstrated in their rigorous pursuit of rural journalism. Documentation does not have to accompany the nomination, but is helpful in choosing finalists, and additional documentation may be requested or required.

Questions may be directed to Cross at 859-257-3744 or [al.cross@uky.edu](mailto:al.cross@uky.edu).

**Letters should be postmarked by Oct. 31 and mailed to:**

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122 Grehan Journalism Building, University of Kentucky  
Lexington KY 40506-0042

