

Vodacom Journalist of the Year: western region winners

The winners of the western region for the 2011 Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards were revealed earlier this week, at a breakfast event held in Cape Town. These awards aim to celebrate distinction by giving recognition to the individuals who continually dedicate their lives to report the news.

A prominent theme found in the western region was the focus on various healthcare issues such as unannounced visits to hospitals, the complex issues of human genetics and exposing the costs of medical schemes.

Convenor of the judges for the Awards, Advocate Robin Sewlal commented, "The competition provides a wonderful opportunity for journalists to be duly recognised for their commitment to quality journalism. In this the 10th year of the contest, we've received an incredible number of entries where the work displays tremendous dynamism and depth.

"The robust debates during the adjudication process ensured that only top-of-the-drawer entries were rewarded. On the behalf of the panel of judges, I thank those who entered and offer heartiest congratulations to the winners in each of the categories. You've done yourself and the country proud."

After an entry period that lasted a month, and a rigorous selection process and plenty of deliberation among the 13 member judging panel, the winners of the Vodacom Journalist of the Year Western region are:

Category	Winner	Winning work	Judges comments
Regional Columnist	Sipho Hlongwane, <i>The Big Issue</i> SA	'Dogs of War' column: Patronising brought to you	One of the defining traits of a good columnist is the ability to tell a story of a serious nature in a light-hearted fashion - taking the Mickey out of the subject. We find this beautifully done by the writer of this article - one of a body of work - on service delivery. Not only does the writer have a way of making light of serious matters, but has the added and rare ability of sustaining the discussion long enough before he gets to say what he really wants to say, which must have been the reason he wrote the article anyway. This, he has been able to achieve - without losing the reader - by a combination of good writing skills, and also infusing an entertaining episode that happened to him on another occasion, which he builds up to in his story. The reader readily sees the connection between the episode and the message. The article adjudged the winning piece, starts off with the writer finding himself in a taxi driven by a magogo (old woman), who, as the writer says, her driving skills have the potential to shame the racing champion, Schumacher, and gives off expletive words like a granny giving off candies to her grandchildren.
Regional Community media	Faatimah Hendricks and Dorianne Arendse, Voice of the Cape	The Battle of Hangberg	The winning entry is a well-researched and lively five-part feature on the socio-economic conditions of the community of Hangberg near Houtbay. The streets of Hangberg turned into a war zone in September 2010 when the City of Cape Town sent a unit in to demolish alleged unoccupied informal structures which were erected on the fire break of the mountain.

Regional Consumer Journalism	Kim Van Reizig, Media 24, <i>YOU, Huisgenoot</i>	Plastics: The Good and The Bad	The winner in this category succeeded in taking scientific information and translating it into a style and language that the non-technical reader could understand. The result was an informative and readable consumer article.
Regional Financial/Economic	Claire Bissek, AUSA, <i>Financial Mail</i>	Do or Die	Health and security are the two most fundamental rights of any human being the world over. And it is precisely because of the crucial nature of these requirements that some amongst the relevant service providers will do just about anything to cash in as much as it is possibly practical. As is always the case, the one to bear the brunt of this unscrupulous way of doing business is the end consumer, who because of his need for these services, ends up paying far more than is legally permissible. The truth though is that the urge to 'rip-off' consumers happens all the time and everywhere, and it is largely thanks to a fearless and enterprising journalistic piece of work that we are able to rein-in these avaricious soulless shar
Regional Online Journalism	Andy Davis, Mahala	Xhosa Kung Fu	It is common for online-only publications to promote creative, intrepid and fascinating journalism. It is rare to see journalists in this country achieve those ideals in an online-only context, as most choose the easy way out. There were superb entries based on careful and intelligent research, but that fell out of the running as a result of not taking it beyond desk research. This journalist did his research, and expanded on it effectively. But it was his ability to explore a fascinating topic on the ground, so to speak, that began to set it apart. The artfulness with which he captured the atmosphere on the ground, combined with an evocative photo gallery, finally made it a clear winner in this region. It enabled the reader to sense the dust and sweat of the action. It exemplified both the craft and art of colourful journalism.
Regional Photography	Tracey Adams	Ticket Scalper	The sequence of photographs is a necessary prerequisite for a powerful story in photo-journalism.
Regional Print: Feature	Elsabé Brits, Media24, <i>Die Burger</i>	Bruin mense se gene opnuut belig	Too often investigative journalism is understood to mean the uncovering of corruption, maladministration or abuse of power. A rich and important field that is rather neglected in South African journalism is the medical and scientific beat. Here we have two stories on human genetics, one explaining the human genome project, the other one the genetic heritage of coloured South Africans, proving that they are one of the oldest and most diverse populations in the world. Good research and understanding of the topic, well constructed and presented with graphics.
Regional Print: General News	Glynis Underhill, <i>Mail & Guardian</i>	Body of work - Series on Anni Dewani, Spy wars, Cele vs Mdhululi, High flying ministers enjoy champagne	Given to this journalist for three stories: an excellent, exhaustive analysis of new developments on the unfolding story of purported hijack victim Anni Dewani; the inside story of the clash between police commissioner Bheki Cele and his head of crime intelligence; and the high-flying lifestyles of cabinet ministers. Thorough and incisive reporting with good sources and well written.
Regional Radio: Feature	Dorianne Arendse, Voice of the Cape	Xenophobia in Western Cape	The winning entry used the very powerful aspects of radio to portray the tragic reality of the attack of foreign nationals living in Cape Town. The reporter went on field visits to two of the hardest hit communities and spoke to locals and foreign nationals who were at the heart of the conflict. Views were sought from experts as well as government, police, human rights and independent experts on the causes and solutions to alleviate future uprisings. The story line was sharp, the sound concise and the content powerful.
Regional Radio: General News	Giovanna Gerbi, Primedia Broadcasting, Eyewitness News	Surprise Hospital Trauma Unit visits	Radio provides the ideal platform to get results when there is a need for urgent action. Proactive and innovative thinking on the part of the journalist is often challenging but can achieve a desired outcome. Our winner showed that unannounced visits to trauma units at state hospitals accompanied by the MEC in charge where medical staff can speak freely can hold staff and leadership accountable and ensure that service delivery happens. The surprise visits lent itself to credible and gripping storytelling with great sound bites and focused content.
Regional Sport	Norman McFarlane, Independent Cape, Bolander Lifestyle	Powerlifting: A magnificent obsession	It's no secret that certain codes of sport pale in insignificance in terms of coverage as compared to the headline grabbing ones like football, cricket and rugby. In some instances, it is worth stretching the point by saying that some other sports suffer with no mileage whatsoever. The journalist here takes one such sport and gives it a human face. He cleverly demonstrates the difficulties experienced by an admirable woman competitor who also holds down a day job. The sport is not well funded and for participants to extract maximum benefit requires dedication. This is a story that underscores perseverance.
Regional Television: Feature	Liz Fish, Carte Blanche, Combined artists	Fracking in the Karoo	The impact of human beings on the planet has to be attested, otherwise we will lose it all. This story illustrates what is at stake. The research is thorough, and it is beautifully filmed with creative use of both technology and graphics.
Regional Television: General News	Dianne Hawker, e.tv	Khayelitsha Toilet Protest	Although this piece ostensibly was about yet another service delivery issue, what it so excellently highlighted is the rising power and confidence of the ANC Youth League in taking control of poverty-stricken areas. The reporters are to be commended for challenging someone in a volatile situation.
Regional Editors Choice	Rafiq Wagiet, Primedia Broadcasting, Eyewitness News		

Regional Cartoonist	Jeremy Nell, <i>The New Age</i> , Jeremy Nell Studio,	Africa 2.0	This cartoonist cleverly used the graphic of an installed computer program to highlight the state of democracy on the African continent
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The regional winners were each awarded with R7500 and also stand a chance of being crowned the national winner of the 2011 Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards at the national awards ceremony to be held on 4 November 2011 in Johannesburg.

The overall 2011 Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards national winner will walk away with R125 000 in prize money, as well as being given the opportunity to donate an additional R125 000 to an official charity of his or her choosing.

The judges for the 2011 Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards included, Advocate Robin Sewlal (convenor), Maud Motanyane (co-convenor), Ruda Landman, Professor Johann de Wet, Mary Papayya, Victor Matom, Dr Melanie Chait, Arthur (ZB) Molefe, Colin Nxumalo, Leonard Maseko, Tim Modise, Arthur Goldstuck and Max du Preez.

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