Wisconsin Newspaper Association 10/27/23

Better Newspaper Contest Judges

To whom it may concern,

Madison Lammert joined The Post-Crescent in June, 2022, fresh out of college, with an unknowably large assignment ahead of her.

As a Reporter for America Corps. member, she was given a beat which hadn’t previously existed in our newsroom: early childhood education. We had a K-12 and statewide issues education reporter, but no one was able to focus on childcare or how we as a state educate our citizens in the first five years of their lives.

And I’ll be the first to admit, I underestimated how busy she would be. It’s just babies, we innocently thought. How much could you possibly write about?

Well, as it turns out the first five years are the most critical in the development of future Wisconsinites and, as luck would have it, The Post-Crescent would, six months later, partner with five other news organizations across the state on the NEW (Northeastern Wisconsin) News Lab’s fourth season: Families Matter. Madison went from the newest reporter in the office to the person locked down under major solutions journalism assignments in a matter of months. This forced her to think on her feet, adapt her writing style, work with colleagues, and try to explain why we need to “think of the babies!”

Her content is a mix of legislative headaches made understandable, service journalism and the constant feedback loop of “childcare is expensive because staffing is short, but staffing is short because it is stressful and pays nothing, but if we pay them more, childcare will just be more expensive.”

Please enjoy these samples of her work, which I feel back up this nomination. I think you’ll be as impressed as I am. You might also end up with a creeping sense of dread at society’s impending doom, but the photos of small children are cute, so … that helps.

Sincerely,

Taima Kern

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