Join us for Beyond the Byline and the Driehaus Foundation Awards for Investigative Reporting

April 15, 2024

Presented by Illinois Answers Project, the BGA’s Pulitzer Prize–winning newsroom

BEYOND THE BYLINE

Featuring the 20th Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Awards for Investigative Reporting

Venue SIX10 | Thursday, May 9th, 2024 | 4:00 - 8:00 P.M.

Illinois Answers Reporters Join Prestigious Investigations Fellowship

April 15, 2024
Illinois Answers reporters Sidnee King and Cam Rodriguez will take part in the New York Times Local Investigations Fellowship this year.

Ink + Impact: A Celebration of Journalism

April 15, 2024
Step into the heart of literary excellence at the American Writers Museum, and engage in captivating conversations, share experiences, and forge connections with like-minded individuals who share a vested belief in the power of journalism and good government. Full bar and appetizers will be served.

**Featured Guests:**

- **Ruby Bailey**, Illinois Answers Project Editor-in-Chief
- **Tim Franklin**, Senior Associate Dean at the Medill School of Journalism

*American Writer’s Museum | April 4th | 5:30 – 7:30 P.M | $20 donation*
Ink + Impact: Ethics in Government

April 15, 2024

Join the BGA Second Century Council for a round table breakfast discussion regarding the City Council’s Ethics Committee, with 47th Ward Alderman Matt Martin.

The 2024 Driehaus Foundation Awards for Investigative Reporting
are Now Open for Submissions

April 15, 2024

Submissions are now open for the 20th Anniversary Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Awards for Investigative Reporting. News organizations across Chicago and Illinois are encouraged to apply. The deadline to submit your entry is Monday, March 18 at 11:59 p.m. CDT.

Submit Your Entries Here

The annual Driehaus Foundation Awards for Investigative Reporting highlight the imperative impact and importance of investigative reporting in Illinois. Judged by a panel of journalists and media educators, the awards were launched two decades ago by the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, thanks in large part to the late Richard Driehaus’ vested belief in the power of journalism as a cornerstone of democracy, in addition to his long-standing collaboration with awards partner, the Better Government Association.

To mark the 20th anniversary of the awards, Illinois Answers Project, the BGA’s Pulitzer Prize-winning newsroom, will host an expanded event and programming, “Beyond the Byline.” This event promises a dynamic and thought-provoking experience, featuring two panels of local news leaders discussing local news’ evolution and the power of news to foster community and civic engagement.
The event will culminate with the lauded Driehaus Foundation Awards for Investigative Reporting, announcing this year’s winners and a conversation with a featured guest and renowned news leader.

We hope you’ll join us for the evening event and celebration, on Thursday, May 9th, from 4:00-8:00 P.M. at Venue SIX10.

**Award Categories:**

**Large Newsroom (newsrooms with editorial staffs of 10 or more):**

- 1st Place – $12,000
- Runner up – $5,000

**Small Newsroom (newsrooms with editorial staffs of less than 10):**

- 1st Place – $7,000
- Runner up – $2,000

**Awards Submission and Contest FAQ:**

**Who is eligible to submit their work?**

Stories can be submitted by newsrooms located in Chicago and Illinois. Illinois-based Freelancers are also eligible to submit their work.

**What stories are eligible for submission?**

Print, digital, radio, and television reporting is accepted. Stories must have been published between January 1 – December 31, 2023.

**How many stories can I enter?**

There is no limit to how many stories you submit; individuals/newsrooms may submit multiple entries from multiple reporters. However, each story or series of stories should be submitted separately.

**What do I need to submit besides a link to my work?**
Supporting material will be accepted but is not necessary.

When will I be notified about whether or not my story is a finalist?

Finalists will be notified via email in late April.

Is there anything else I should know?

All applications must meet the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics standards. Entities that are principally advocacy organizations are not eligible. Entries should include all related corrections, clarifications, or retractions.

Additional Questions?
Contact Saloni Nahar at snahar@bettergov.org

Daniel Goodwin, Namesake of BGA’s Watchdog Award, Dies at 80

April 15, 2024
Daniel Goodwin, a former teacher whose extraordinary success in real estate set the stage for civic leadership in the Chicago area, died Jan. 19. He was 80 years old.

Goodwin, the longtime chair of Oak Brook-based Inland Real Estate, was a former longtime board member of the Better Government Association, publisher of the
Illinois Answers Project. He was a major donor to the BGA, and beginning in 2017, the BGA named the award bestowing its highest honor for Goodwin, the Daniel L. Goodwin Watchdog Award — a year after Goodwin himself was the honoree.

The 2016 BGA Watchdog Award citation noted Goodwin’s “lifetime contributions to business, economic development, philanthropy and civic engagement, as well as his passionate advocacy for responsible government reform in Illinois.”

A hallmark of Goodwin’s career-long commitment to public service was his transformative turn as chair of the DuPage Airport Authority. For a decade beginning in 2003, he worked to retire $26 million in debt and lead the airport to profitability. The DuPage Flight Center was named in Goodwin’s honor in 2016.

Goodwin’s biography tells an unlikely story of remarkable accomplishment. Raised in North Avondale, a graduate of Lane Tech High School and then a college now known as Northeastern Illinois University, he became an 8th grade science teacher. To earn money on the side, he and three fellow teachers began buying, rehabbing and flipping homes.

Over time this became Inland Realty Group, founded in 1968. Today, Inland is one of the largest commercial and residential property investors in the U.S. and, through its partnerships, a path toward wealth for thousands of investors.

Goodwin joined the BGA board of directors as it was nearing the end of a difficult period. His commitment as chair of the BGA’s finance committee under a vigorous new leader — the former television journalist Andy Shaw — helped lead the BGA from a low point of three full-time employees and a budget of around $300,000 to more than 20 full-time staff and a budget of $3 million in 2017.

At the height of his involvement with the BGA, Goodwin traveled from his office or home in the western suburbs to downtown Chicago more than 30 times a year for BGA meetings.

Goodwin was a trusted advisor to BGA President and CEO David Greising, offering counsel based on his business acumen and commitment to ethical, efficient and accountable government. Goodwin’s guidance, backed by Inland’s steadfast financial commitment, helped the BGA accelerate its growth trajectory.
“Dan always kept his entrepreneurial mindset, his optimism about the potential for good government and his real-world reckoning with why reform can be so difficult,” Greising said. “His commitment and vision, plus a twist of good humor, made him a real asset in the effort.”

Goodwin also was a proponent of fair and equitable housing, a conservationist, an advocate for disabled and disadvantaged young people and a supporter of higher education. He served for 20 years on the board of Benedictine University’s College of Business, which is now named for him.

His good-government work never stopped. In recent years Goodwin backed an effort, not yet successful, to pass a bill outlawing extortion by public officials in the state of Illinois.

Goodwin also was a founding supporter of a Martin Luther King Day breakfast in DuPage County, which drew hundreds to the Drury Lane in Oak Brook Terrace just days before his death from a respiratory ailment.

In addition to his wife, Carol, and two adult daughters, Goodwin is survived by the three other founding investors of Inland — all of whom remain active in the business.

Visitation for Goodwin will be held from 4 to 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 2, at Knollcrest Funeral Home, 1500 S. Meyer Road, in Lombard. A funeral mass for Goodwin will be held at 11:30 a.m. the following day at St. Mary’s of Gostyn Church, 445 Prairie Ave., in Downers Grove. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital at www.stjude.org/give.

BGA Names Ruby L. Bailey Editor of Illinois Answers Project

April 15, 2024
Ruby L. Bailey, a seasoned newsroom leader with a deep appreciation of the power of journalism to prompt positive change, is joining the Better Government Association’s Illinois Answers Project as editor-in-chief.

Bailey joins Illinois Answers from USA Today, where she served as consumer editor. Prior to that, she was opinion and public engagement editor at the Indianapolis Star, and she previously served as executive editor of The Missourian, in Columbia Missouri.

At USA Today, Bailey led projects that focused on the impact of the Fair Housing Act on Black homeownership and diversity in the C-suite of corporations after the murder of George Floyd. At the Indianapolis Star, she reported and wrote columns that gave voice to people often overlooked by the power structure of the city. Bailey also has advocated for the power of solutions-focused journalism, following intensive solutions training undertaken in 2019.

“Ruby is a natural leader with a proven track record of enabling journalists to do their very best work. She connects actively with communities she covers so their voices are heard. Ruby has led incisive reporting projects and her outwardly focused mindset will help connect us to our journalism and community partners,” said David Greising, president of the BGA. “Under Ruby’s leadership, the BGA’s
Illinois Answers Project will produce journalism that exposes wrongs, finds solutions, and has a positive impact on the people of Illinois.”

“My life’s work and mission is empowering communities through journalism,” said Bailey. “I can think of no better place than the Illinois Answers Project to lead a group of journalists committed to that important work for the people of Chicago and Illinois. Together, we will delve deeply into the most pressing problems and give residents the information they need and deserve to effect the change in our communities.”

A journalism graduate from Wayne State University, with a masters in theology from Biola University, Bailey got her start in professional journalism in Flint, Michigan before returning to her native Detroit. At the Detroit Free Press, she produced award-winning coverage about tensions between Muslim and Black residents after the shooting of a Black man at a gas station. Bailey later served as Washington Bureau correspondent for the Free Press and was embedded with the U.S. Navy during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Bailey serves on the boards of the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting and the Missouri Press Foundation. She will begin her leadership for the Illinois Answers Project newsroom on Jan. 2, 2024.

The BGA, which is celebrating the 100th year of its founding, in 2022 began publishing the Illinois Answers Project, an investigative and solutions-focused website focused on public safety and accountability; education; equity and economic opportunity, and government finance and accountability. The BGA in late 2021 received a commitment of up to $10 million from the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, to make possible a major investment in solutions reporting and civic outreach that enhances the impact of Illinois Answers Project journalism.

In 2022, the BGA was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Local Reporting for its coverage, with the Chicago Tribune, of failures in fire safety by the City of Chicago that contributed to more than 60 deaths over four years.
Illinois Answers Project Welcomes 2 Reporters to Launch State Embed Initiative

April 15, 2024
The Illinois Answers Project has welcomed two journalists for its new state investigative and solutions team funded by The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.

Embedded investigative reporters Grace Hauck and Meredith Newman joined the
newsroom this fall and are working to collaborate with local newsrooms across Illinois. The team is also hiring for a third reporter.

The goal of the statewide embed initiative is to pair Illinois Answers’ investigative and solutions resources with the local news judgment and reader expertise of partner newsrooms. The combined effort will produce statewide reports with local relevance, while addressing problems and solutions of consequence in overlooked cities and rural populations statewide.

Initial partner newsrooms include the State Register-Journal in Springfield, the News-Gazette in Champaign, Shaw Local News Network across northern Illinois, and the Journal Star in Peoria.
Meredith Newman, left, and Grace Hauck in Springfield in November.

Grace Hauck was most recently a criminal justice reporter for USA TODAY in Chicago, where she investigated a fraudulent nationwide COVID testing scheme based in Illinois, reported a series of exonerations related to a corrupt former Chicago detective, and spearheaded a nationwide examination of how school
children are prepared for active shooters.

Hauck also reported on national and international breaking news events, including the Highland Park Fourth of July shooting, and numerous high-profile criminal trials, such as the Derek Chauvin trial in the murder of George Floyd.

Previously, she worked at the Deccan Herald in Bangalore. Hauck is a native of New Jersey and she studied at the University of Chicago.

Meredith Newman most recently was an investigative reporter at The News-Journal in Wilmington, Delaware, where she reported on health care, state politics and policy as well as Joe Biden’s presidential campaign.

During the pandemic, her watchdog reporting revealed how nursing homes failed to curb the virus at a time when resident deaths were among the highest in the nation, as well as how Delaware struggled to make vaccines accessible to the Black and Latino communities. Her reporting into assisted living facilities documented how the state failed to provide oversight and funding for more than a decade, leading to unlivable conditions and tragic deaths. She also produced a year-long series on the health care struggles of the Amish community.

Before living in Delaware, Meredith worked at The Capital in Annapolis, Maryland. Newman is a graduate of Syracuse University and is from Evanston, Illinois.

The Illinois Answers Project is a nonprofit, nonpartisan newsroom published by the Better Government Association, the state’s nonprofit full-service watchdog organization. This new statewide initiative is a key component of the Illinois Solutions Plan, a multi-year strategy developed by the BGA to expand its investigative and solutions reporting resources as well as outreach to communities across the state.

The team is hiring another reporter to join in early 2024. For questions about this program or the open position, contact state & solutions editor Rachel Aretakis at raretakis@illinoisanswers.org.
Watch Illinois Answers Project Discussion About Chicago Tenant Rights and Safety

April 15, 2024

The Illinois Answers Project hosted a discussion Thursday about the recent two-part series where reporter Alex Nitkin examines how two Colorado cities have implemented solutions to protect tenants and how a similar program could potentially be implemented in Chicago.

If you missed this live discussion, you can watch the recording below.

Nitkin and Metropolitan Tenants Organization community organizer Arieh Venick discussed Chicago’s building safety record, what other cities are doing to protect tenants and what you need to know as a renter.

Nitkin discussed the findings from his two-part series, which explored how Denver officials are working to register every landlord and proactively inspect rental units. Nitkin also previously reported on how Illinois policymakers have struggled in recent years to catch up with national trends in safety standards and explored two other cities that Chicago could emulate for safer buildings.

The series followed a 2021 Illinois Answers Project joint investigation with the
Chicago Tribune, “The Failures Before the Fires,” that exposed how in Chicago, unsafe living conditions and an outdated, disorganized building inspection system have resulted in countless preventable deaths. The investigative series uncovered that 42 lethal fires occurred in buildings with fire safety problems known to city officials.

Subscribe to Illinois Answers Project’s free weekly newsletter to stay up to date on upcoming events and to get our award-winning reporting delivered straight to your inbox.

What to Know About Illinois FOIA Laws, From Public Records Expert Matt Topic

April 15, 2024

The Illinois Answers Project and Better Government Association hosted a free community FOIA training with attorney Matt Topic. Here’s a recap.