



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 4, 2026

Bloomington North Student Named 2026 Indiana Journalist of the Year

FRANKLIN, Ind. — The Indiana High School Press Association (IHSPA) has named Bloomington High School North senior Kelton O’Connell the 2026 Indiana High School Journalist of the Year, recognizing his exceptional leadership, reporting, innovation and commitment to serving his community through journalism.

At BHSN, O’Connell has led the Nikean yearbook staff with vision and collaboration, helping the publication earn honors from Ball State University’s National Student Media Contests and IHSPA’s Hoosier Star Awards. His leadership also reaches well beyond journalism. Teachers and administrators consistently describe him as thoughtful, ethical and deeply dedicated to amplifying student voice.

“In my more than 30 years in education, he stands among the very best students I have seen at informing the public and navigating complex topics with clarity and fairness,” BHSN Principal Matthew Stark wrote in his recommendation letter for O’Connell.

Outside the classroom, O’Connell has built an impressive portfolio of real-world experiences — ranging from producing work for The B Square Bulletin in Bloomington to completing an internship with Formosa Television in Taiwan. The Bulletin’s editor and publisher, Dave Askins, praised O’Connell’s initiative and adaptability, noting he quickly mastered newsroom style, exercised strong editorial judgment and consistently proposed solutions that strengthened the publication’s digital presence.

“Whatever it is you think you’re pretty good at, having Kelton around will make you even better,” Askins wrote.

O’Connell has distinguished himself as a versatile multimedia journalist, an award-winning editor and a professional-level newsroom contributor. For IHSPA, he represents the future of journalism: adaptable, community-focused, technologically fluent and guided by a strong ethical compass.

“He believes in telling stories that serve his community, amplify voices and make people care,” wrote Troy Cockrum, BHSN student media adviser and journalism educator. “That mindset, combined with his skill and work ethic, makes him an outstanding Journalist of the Year.”

O’Connell will receive \$1,000 from IHSPA and represent Indiana in the national competition through the Journalism Education Association (JEA). Four finalists were also recognized and have earned \$250 for their achievements: Lilah Cross (Noblesville High School), Lucy Len Dim (Southport High School), Dani Montgomery (Westfield High School) and Lili Perez (Hamilton Southeastern High School).

For more information about IHSPA and its awards, visit ihspa.net/awards.

Media Contact:

Ryan Gunterman, MJE

Executive Director

Indiana High School Press Association

ihspa@franklincollege.edu

ADDRESS

101 Branigin Boulevard
Franklin College
Pulliam School of Journalism
Shirk Hall, Room 203
Franklin, Indiana 46131

INFORMATION

<http://ihspa.net>

[f](#) [@](#) [@IHSPAnews](#)

