



St. Petersburg Times Wins Two Pulitzer Prizes

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (April 20, 2009) -- The St. Petersburg Times today won two Pulitzer Prizes, recognized for its fact-checking Web site, PolitiFact, and a feature story about a feral child living in deplorable conditions who was rescued and adopted.

The 2009 Pulitzer Prize in National Reporting was awarded to the St. Petersburg Times staff for PolitiFact, which helped change the face of political reporting in the 2008 presidential campaign. The site uses the Truth-O-Meter to rate the truth of statements made by the president and other political leaders. It is led by PolitiFact Editor Bill Adair. For more, go to <http://www.politifact.com>.

PolitiFact is the first reporting effort created for the Web to win a Pulitzer Prize.

The 2009 Pulitzer Prize in Feature Writing was awarded to Times' staff writer Lane DeGregory, whose special report on Danielle in "The Girl in the Window" generated more response than any piece of journalism ever published on the Times Web site Tampabay.com, and perhaps as much as any story told in the modern history of the St. Petersburg Times. DeGregory posed the question: Could love and caring make up for a lifetime of neglect? For more, go to <http://www.tampabay.com/specials/2008/reports/danielle/>.

"These two Pulitzers showcase the absolute commitment of the St. Petersburg Times to both Web-based journalism and narrative storytelling," said Executive Editor Neil Brown. "By deploying our staff in an intelligent and heartfelt pursuit of separating campaign rhetoric from the truth, we pushed ourselves, our peers and even the candidates themselves to a new level of accountability.

"Lane DeGregory's beautifully told story touched our audience in so many ways and raised awareness about child neglect, foster care and abuse investigations," Brown said.

Times staff writer John Barry also was honored as a Pulitzer finalist in feature writing for his series on Winter the dolphin, who was rescued and fitted with a prosthetic tail. It is a story on the mysterious connection between man and dolphin. For more, go to <http://www.tampabay.com/specials/2008/reports/winter/>

The 2009 Pulitzer Prizes are the 7th and 8th in the history of the St. Petersburg Times, and the first time the newspaper has received more than one Pulitzer in the same year. This year only two newspapers won more than one Pulitzer – the Times and the New York Times, which won five.

About PolitiFact

Created by the St. Petersburg Times in August 2007, PolitiFact launched this unique Web site to separate fact from falsehood in the claims made during the 2008 presidential campaign.

The site features a Truth-O-Meter that scores the truthfulness of specific claims by the presidential candidates. More than 865 findings have been published on <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/> and in the Times.

Journalists and researchers from the Times fact-checked the accuracy of many speeches, TV ads, interviews and other campaign claims and communications. PolitiFact is bolder than previous journalistic fact-checking efforts because the editors make a call, declaring whether a claim is True, Mostly True, Half True, Barely True, or False. There is a special category for the most outrageous claims called "Pants on Fire."

In January 2009 PolitiFact relaunched, debuting another unprecedented journalistic effort by tracking President Obama's campaign promises and measuring the progress of his presidency.

The staff compiled 510 promises for a new feature called the "Obameter" that tracks the progress of the new president's agenda and provides the audience with an up-to-the-minute report card.

PolitiFact received the 2008 Excellence in Online Journalism Award from the National Press Foundation and was a finalist in the Washington reporting category of the Scripps Howard Foundation's National Journalism Awards.

About Girl in the Window

In 2005, police were called to a house in Plant City, Fla., to investigate a case of child neglect. What they found, Times staffer writer Lane DeGregory wrote, was a tiny creature "curled on her side, long legs tucked into her emaciated chest on top of a torn, moldy mattress thrown on the floor...Flies picked at her face. Insect bites, rashes and sores pocked her pale skin. Though she looked old enough to be in school, she was naked – except for a swollen diaper."

The little girl was Danielle, whom the child welfare system came to know as the feral, or wild, child. She apparently was never taught to speak, never nurtured. She had never seen a doctor, never been to school. There seemed little hope that she would ever have a normal, dignified life.

The story begins with Danielle's discovery, continues with her adoption by a brave and supportive family, and ends in a searing interview with the birth mother. To read the amazing story, go to <http://www.tampabay.com/specials/2008/reports/danielle/>.

DeGregory won first place in the feature writing category of the National Headliner Awards for a body of work that included "The Girl in the Window."

Times' History of Pulitzer Prizes

2009 – National Reporting – the *St. Petersburg Times Staff* for PolitiFact, its fact-checking initiative during the 2008 presidential campaign that used probing reporters and the power of the World Wide Web to examine political claims, separating rhetoric from truth to enlighten voters.

2009 – Feature Writing – **Lane DeGregory** for her story about the discovery of a feral child shut off from the world until she was discovered and adopted by a supportive family.

1998 - Feature Writing – Thomas French for his detailed and compassionate narrative portrait of a mother and two daughters slain on a Florida vacation, and the three-year investigation into their murders.

1995 – Editorial Writing - Jeffrey Good for his editorial campaign urging reform of Florida's probate system for settling estates.

1991 - Feature Writing - Sheryl James for a compelling series about a mother who abandoned her newborn child and how it affected her life and those of others.

1985 – Investigative Reporting – Lucy Morgan and Jack Reed for thorough reporting on Pasco County Sheriff John Short, which revealed his department's corruption and led to his removal from office by voters.

1980 – Meritorious Public Service - Bette Orsini and Charles Stafford for an investigation of the Church of Scientology.

1964 – Meritorious Public Service - The St. Petersburg Times and writer Martin Waldron for coverage of the Florida Turnpike Authority and its reckless expenditure of public money.

About the St. Petersburg Times

The *St. Petersburg Times* is Florida's largest newspaper with an average circulation of 390,289 Sunday and 268,935 daily (ABC publisher's statement 9/30/08). Considered one of the top 10 newspapers in the country, the newspaper has eight Pulitzer Prizes to its name. In addition to its flagship newspaper, the company reaches a digital audience with TampaBay.com and a younger audience with tbt* TampaBay Times, a free daily tabloid. The total combined audience of these three brands is nearly 1.6 million people each week.

Contacts

Bill Adair, PolitiFact Editor, adair@sptimes.com, (202) 463-0575

Jeanne Grinstead, Deputy Managing Editor/Administration, grinstead@sptimes.com
(727) 893-8769

Jounice Nealy-Brown, Brand Manager/Times, nealybrown@sptimes.com (727) 893-8289