

Daily News

TRUTH in a TRUTHINESS AGE

SPJ Region 11 Conference
April 10, 2026 – Phoenix, AZ

It's a Dry Beat: Speaking Truth in a Truthiness Age
Western Regional Conference
Society of Professional Journalists

Friday, April 10, 2026
Flinn Foundation
1802 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, Arizona
#spjphxconference26

WELCOME TO PHOENIX

The Valley of the Sun Professional Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists welcomes you to the SPJ Region 11 Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. Our chapter is pleased and honored to present this day of highly applicable and useful knowledge, both from the informative and relevant sessions and from the unexpected, unscripted interactions that have regrettably become less common in each journalist's workday. We hope you'll find these hours to have long-lasting value, both in the moment as you meet deadlines and as your career continues maturing as time goes on.



SCHEDULE

The hashtag for our event is **#spjphxconference26**

Bios of our speakers may be found at <https://bit.ly/spjphxconfbios>

Thursday, April 9

- 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.** Pre-conference mixer at the **Old Spaghetti Factory**, 1418 N. Central Ave., Phoenix (McDowell Road stop on Valley Metro Light Rail B Line)

Friday, April 10

- 8:30 a.m.** *Arrival/check-in:* Continental breakfast and networking (**Flinn Foundation** building lobby, 1802 N. Central Ave.; McDowell Road stop on Valley Metro Light Rail B Line)
- 9:00 a.m.** *Welcome and Order of the Day:* **Tim Eigo**, president, Valley of the Sun SPJ. Greetings from **Stacy Sullivan** and **Brian Powell**, Flinn Foundation, and **Christian Monterrosa**, SciLine/AAAS
- 9:05 a.m.** **How We Got the Story**, with selected winners of the Arizona Press Club annual journalism contest, moderated by **Camryn Sanchez**, senior field correspondent, KJZZ-FM (91.5, Phoenix) and Press Club contest chair. Speakers include: **Robert Anglen**, *Arizona Republic/azcentral*; **Yvonne Wingett Sanchez**, *The Atlantic*. Reporters take you behind the scenes to describe the leads and investigations that helped them develop high-impact stories.
- 10:15 a.m.** **Secrets of Public Records Sleuths**, with **Cody Lillich**, senior executive producer, Arizona's Family (KTVK-TV, Channel 3 and KPHO-TV, Channel 5, Phoenix). This session offers insights and techniques to find, access and navigate public records to get stories. We'll discuss overcoming access obstacles, using public-access tools and developing a records-request mindset. *Presented with the First Amendment Coalition of Arizona.*

Friday, April 10 (continued)

- 11:30 a.m.** **Lunch & SPJ Region 11 Mark of Excellence Awards** honoring student journalism
- *11:30 a.m.:* Awards presentation by **Ankita Kumar**, SPJ Region 11 coordinator
 - *Noon:* Q&A between **Shawn White**, the Gen Z publisher of the 115-year-old *Painted Desert Tribune* in Winslow, Arizona, and **Lisa Simpson**, senior vice president, Arizona Media Association
- 12:45 p.m.** **Saving and Investing: Tips for Journalists, with Jeff Julander and Adam Kaplan, JK Wealth Management, Scottsdale.** These financial advisors share insights on savings and retirement focused on journalists.
- 1:30 p.m.** AI Tools for News, Parts 1 and 2, via Google News Initiative, with **Iain Christie**: Learn about many Google AI tools, starting with Gemini for News, your personal AI assistant, and how it can be used in the newsroom. Also covered: two AI-enabled tools, Create and Detect AI tools, and SynthID.
- 3:15 p.m.** **Reporting That Informs and Empowers**, moderated by **Dianna Nández**, executive editor, *Arizona Luminaria*, Tucson, and **Chelsea Curtis**, reporter, *Arizona Luminaria*, Tucson; **Elvia Diaz**, former editorial page editor, *The Arizona Republic/azcentral*, and now reporting and commenting from her own Substack newsletter, “NOTAS con Elvia Diaz”; **Joseph Darius Jaafari**, founder and editor-in-chief of LOOKOUT News; **Cheyenne Murphrey**, wellness trends and topic reporter for The Associated Press. Panelists discuss ways to get stories and cover communities with respect, which helps build long-term relationships and surfaces narratives that often go untold.
- 4:15 p.m.** **News Literacy: Education over Disinformation**, with News Literacy for Arizona founder **Michelle Beaver**. Learn how the News Literacy for Arizona program is helping students learn: the importance of news literacy, the dangers of disinformation, the power of algorithms, the value of journalism and how to build a diverse news diet.
- Sessions end 4:45 p.m.*
- 5:30 p.m.** **Mixer and newsroom tour**, *Arizona Republic/azcentral*, with **Greg Burton**, executive editor, Park Central, 3121 N. Third Ave. (enter from Central Avenue; Thomas Road stop on Valley Metro Light Rail B Line). *Sponsored by USA TODAY Co. and The Arizona Republic/azcentral*
- 7:30 p.m.** Conference ends

SPECIAL THANKS

We are deeply grateful to **our sponsors**.

This conference is funded in part by the national **Society of Professional Journalists** and the **Kiplinger Program in Public Affairs Journalism** at **Ohio University's E.W. Scripps School of Journalism**.

Our venue sponsor is the **Flinn Foundation**. Our breakfast sponsor is **SciLine** of the **American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)**. Our lunch sponsor is the **Arizona Media Association**. Our after-conference reception sponsor is *The Arizona Republic/azcentral*.

Many thanks go to **Arizona Latino Media Association** for their efforts in promoting this event.

And much appreciation also goes to the organizations serving as session co-presenters:

Arizona Luminaria

Arizona Press Club

First Amendment Coalition of Arizona

News Literacy for Arizona

And a big shout-out to our SPJ Region 11 Coordinator **Ankita M. Kumar**, for her valuable assistance and support!

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ABOUT OUR SPONSORS



The **Society of Professional Journalists** is the nation's most broad-based journalism organization, dedicated to encouraging the free practice of journalism and upholding high ethical standards. Founded in 1909 as Sigma Delta Chi, SPJ champions journalists by recognizing outstanding achievement, protecting press freedom, promoting ethics, and preparing new generations of professionals.



The **Valley of the Sun Professional Chapter** of SPJ was chartered in 1958. The chapter regularly sponsors journalism activities and events for reporters, editors, writers, freelancers, producers, publishers and public relations professionals working in the Phoenix metropolitan area. **In 2023 and 2025, SPJ presented the chapter with the national Circle of Excellence Award for Professional Development.**



The **Flinn Foundation** is a Phoenix-based privately endowed, philanthropic grantmaking organization established in 1965 by Dr. Robert S. and Irene P. Flinn that awards grants and operates programs in four areas: the biosciences, which includes advancing the research and commercialization goals of Arizona's

Bioscience Roadmap; the Flinn Scholars Program; arts and culture; and the Arizona Center for Civic Leadership and its Flinn–Brown Fellowship. The foundation's mission is to improve the quality of life in Arizona to benefit future generations.



Journalism has many functions, maybe none as important as the requirement to unravel the difficult issues facing our worlds. Using truth as a leverage, we engage, explore and expose that which causes us pain, but offers us hope.

The **Kiplinger Program in Public Affairs Journalism** has as its mission the training of professional journalists to better serve the public needs in covering these challenging topics..



The **Arizona Media Association** is a 501-(c)(6) non-profit corporation that acts as the official trade association for Arizona's local radio, TV, print and digital industry. Its mission is to futureproof community connection by amplifying the unique

role local media can play in every Arizona neighborhood. The association also underwrites the Arizona Local News Initiative to connect communities with more local news and information. Membership includes nearly 400 radio stations, TV stations, digital operations and associate groups, built upon the foundations created by the former Arizona Broadcasters Association and Arizona Newspapers Association.



SciLine is a free service for journalists and scientists based at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest multidisciplinary scientific society. Editorially independent, nonpartisan, and funded by philanthropies, SciLine has the singular mission of enhancing the amount and quality of scientific evidence in news stories. SciLine works directly with U.S. journalists to support the incorporation of scientific evidence and expertise into their news stories. It facilitates one-on-one interviews with scientists, hosts media briefings on science topics, collects and distributes expert quotes on breaking news, and organizes professional training events—with a special emphasis on the needs of local and general assignment reporters. SciLine also works directly with U.S. and Canadian scientists, recruiting them to serve as experts in all our services for journalists as well as offering training to prepare them for successful interactions with the media.

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

azcentral.com

The Republic is dedicated to delivering essential and trusted content with a mission of empowering communities, the Republic is dedicated to delivering essential and trusted content with a commitment to unbiased journalism. We are part of the USA TODAY Co. Network and adhere to the Principles of Ethical Conduct in Newsrooms. Established during territorial times as The Arizona Republican, its objectives have stayed firm: to serve the community, uphold truth, champion transparency and hold those in power to account. In that pursuit, The Republic's journalism has been widely recognized, including a 2018 Pulitzer Prize for "The Wall," a special report with USA TODAY on President Donald Trump's then-proposed border wall.



Arizona Latino Media Association

The **Arizona Latino Media Association (ALMA)** is a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization founded in 1997 with a mission to strengthen the media industry through diversity initiatives that deepen the scope, coverage and understanding of the Latino community. ALMA is dedicated to ensuring fair and balanced reporting on issues that matter most to Latinos in Arizona. In 2015, ALMA proudly became the Phoenix chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ). As an official NAHJ chapter, ALMA continues to adapt to the changing media environment while welcoming and supporting the next generation of media professionals with great excitement.



Founded in 1924, the **Arizona Press Club** is a nonprofit organization of professional reporters, editors, photographers and designers from publications across the state. The Press Club's goal is to promote excellence in journalism through an annual contest, training seminars, scholarships and networking events.



Arizona Luminaria is a nonprofit newsroom dedicated to truly local news and community-centered journalism. *Arizona Luminaria* listens, learns and lights a path for people who want local news that's a resource for action, equality and democracy. Its staff members believe in local news that places the needs of people and communities first and in local journalism that's accountable to all Arizonans, especially our most vulnerable communities. They value the stories, strengths and struggles of all Arizonans and their grassroots approach to journalism listens, learns, adapts and unites.



Journalism is in a PR crisis. What are we doing to solve it? Private funding is supporting more outlets, but "more journalism" falls short if people don't trust journalism in the first place. The answer is to educate people on news literacy so they appreciate journalism and can identify fact from fiction. **News Literacy for Arizona** is helping students learn the importance of news literacy, the dangers of disinformation, the power of algorithms, the value of journalism and how to build a diverse news diet. During the SPJ regional conference, we'll explore how the News Literacy for Arizona model can be used throughout our SPJ region and can invigorate our profession.

2025-2026 VALLEY OF THE SUN SPJ CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS



60 YEARS
1958 - 2018

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