

2026 AWARDS COMPETITION

**DESIGN,
EDITORIAL, &
GENERAL EXCELLENCE**

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Awards Open: June 24, 2026

Awards Close: August 7, 2026



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Entries Due: August 7, 2026

Please note: Submissions from ancillary publications are not eligible for the main awards section. All submissions from ancillary publications must be entered in the AP categories. Submissions must be from work published between July 2025-June 2026. Fees are \$55 for each entry and \$95 for general excellence.

Awards Entry URL: BetterBNC.com

2026 DESIGN CATEGORIES

D1-FRONT COVER – ORIGINAL PHOTO

Entries must be the cover of the primary publication and use original photography to attract readers and draw them into the issue. The cover should demonstrate intelligent and artistic use of typography, space, design and color. The photo art and the tease for the lead story should support each other. No stock photos are allowed; photo must be commissioned/assigned and first published by the submitting publication. *Submit 1 cover.*

D2-FRONT COVER – USE OF STOCK PHOTO

Entries must be the cover of the primary publication use stock photos to draw the reader in. The cover should demonstrate intelligent and artistic use of typography, space, design and color. The photo art and the tease for the lead story should support each other. Entry is judged on use of stock photo; not the quality of the photo itself. *Submit 1 cover.*

D3-FRONT COVER – ILLUSTRATION

Entries must be the cover of the primary publication and may use original or stock art to draw the reader in. The design may be any medium other than photography, i.e. hand-drawn, painted, textile or computer-drawn image. The overall cover should demonstrate intelligent and artistic use of typography, space, design and color. The art and the tease for the lead story should support each other. *Submit 1 cover.*

D4 – TABLE OF CONTENTS

Entries must exhibit a clear and well-organized road map to the publication through interesting design, making the TOC enticing, attractive but most importantly, useful to readers. *Submit 1 TOC.*

D5 – USE OF TYPOGRAPHY

Entries must demonstrate creative use of typography, in harmony with other visual elements; as well as effective use of space, arrangement, and other design considerations. *Submit 1 layout, including all pages of the story.*

D6 – SINGLE PAGE DESIGN

Entries must be a one-page design. Entries should not be a single page from a multi-page layout or from standard department pages. Instead, this category is for editorial material that is confined to only one page. Art and typography should convey the tone of the content. *Submit 1 story.*

D7 – DEPARTMENT DESIGN

Entries must be a design of an entire department, i.e., collection of material, that appears in each issue of the publication and is not covered by one of the other design categories. Art and typography should convey the tone of the content, as well as unite the individual items. Entries cannot be features. *Submit the same section from 2 issues.*

D8 – CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Entries will be judged on the visual appeal, interesting design and readability of the calendar. This is a design award and should not be confused with the editorial category. *Submit complete calendar sections from 2 different issues.*

D9 – EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Entries should consist of a single page or spread that appears in every issue and presents a curated selection of general events happening in the community. Judging is based on the selection and arrangement of visual elements, typography and space, overall effectiveness, and other design considerations. *Submit the same section from 2 issues.*

D10 – FEATURE LAYOUT

Entries must demonstrate creativity and resourcefulness in the selection and use of art, photographs, typography and/or other elements; as well as effective use of space, arrangement, and other design considerations. *Submit 1 layout, including all pages of the story.*

D11 – SPECIAL SECTION

Entries must be special sections or pull-out guides within a publication. Sections must have an editorial theme supported by its design. These sections may contain advertising, but they should not consist solely of advertisements. Submissions should exhibit good use of typography and space, as well as resourcefulness in the selection and use of art. *Submit 1 complete section.*

D12 – OVERALL DESIGN

Entries must clearly demonstrate superior design throughout the entire publication. Good design should not only serve the reader, but also engage, delight and often surprise. Organization of the publication should be well defined, with intelligent use of space, photos, artwork and typography throughout. There should be a clear delineation between editorial content and ads. Placement of ads should be considered part of the total design and organization for the publication. The design must establish and sustain a visual identity of the publication. *Submit 1 copy of 3 consecutive issues.*

Please note: "Regularly" means in at least half of the issues (for example, 6 times a year for a 12-month publication; 3 times for a 6-month publication). Entries must be ORIGINAL to your publication. No reprints or syndicated columns permitted. Work submitted for editorial awards may have appeared in print or online, except for the following categories for which entries should come from the print/e-book publication: E1, E3, E4, E5 and E6.

2026 EDITORIAL CATEGORIES

E1 – OVERALL WRITING

This award recognizes superior, engaging writing throughout a publication. Submissions must demonstrate a variety of well-written articles in every editorial facet, including the calendar, publisher's/editor's note, briefs and lists/directories that are not advertising-related. The publication should introduce and elaborate on a theme or themes important to parents and should reflect a strong local flavor throughout. The majority of the writing should be original work. Writing should exhibit strong ledes, a variety of sentence length, strong verb use and strong descriptions. (This category is strictly editorial; design is not a consideration.) *Submit 1 copy of 3 complete consecutive issues.*

E2 – RECURRING COLUMN

Entries must be locally generated columns published regularly by a single writer or a dedicated team of writers working collaboratively. Entries should have a distinct voice, unique writing style, and interesting choice of subject matter, and also should demonstrate relatability to the intended audience. *Submit columns from 2 issues.*

E3 – PUBLISHER'S/EDITOR'S NOTE

Entries must be editorial opinions or essays written by the publisher or editorial leadership. Entries should establish the publication's voice and influence in the local parenting community. This column must appear in each issue. *Submit columns from 2 issues.*

E4 – BRIEFS/SHORT STUFF

Entries must be a potpourri of short, timely, unrelated items packaged together as a column or section that appears regularly in the publication. Some, but not all, items must be local. The entries and headlines should be written in an engaging, yet concise style. *Submit complete sections or columns from 2 issues.*

E5 – CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Entries must list specific, upcoming family-oriented events in the publication's area of coverage. Preference will be given to calendars that list a wide variety of events for children. This section may include related resources, listings, roundups, etc. The section may contain advertising, but it should not consist solely of advertisements. The format should be user-friendly and include contact information. The calendar must be in each issue. *Submit complete calendar sections from 2 issues.*

E6 – SPECIAL SECTION WITHIN A PUBLICATION

Entries must be special sections or pull-out guides. This section may be on any topic, i.e. a comprehensive resource guide, stories on one topic from many angles, etc. The section should exhibit strong reporting. It may contain advertising, but it should not consist solely of advertisements. This may not be a stand-alone publication. (See AP categories.) *Submit 1 copy of the complete issue including the section.*

E7 – CHILD DEVELOPMENT & PARENTING ARTICLE

Entries must be locally generated articles on child development, behavioral issues or parenting advice. The article should establish the publication as a voice of authority in the community; it may include both professional advice and personal anecdotes. *Submit 1 article.*

E8 – FAMILY MATTERS ARTICLE

Entries must be locally generated articles offering substantive information on matters of general interest, e.g., health, safety, nutrition, finance, etc. The article should clearly establish the publication as a voice of authority on the topic; it may include both professional advice and personal anecdotes. *Submit 1 article.*

E9 – FAMILY FUN ARTICLE

Entries must be locally generated articles that focus on family fun, recreation or entertainment, such as cooking, sports, dining out, toys and games, nature activities, day trips, etc. *Submit 1 article.*

E10 – TRAVEL FEATURE

Entries must provide useful information about family travel destinations. They must include specific details relevant to local parents. They must establish that the destinations are appropriate and interesting for children and offer suggestions of family-friendly sights and activities. *Submit 1 article.*

E11 – PERSONAL ESSAY

Entries must be locally generated essays written in first person and should evoke an emotional response from the reader. Submissions may be humorous, serious or reflective. *Submit 1 article.*

E12 – PROFILE

Entries should be a balanced, fair and insightful look at an individual or group of people. Profiles should reveal something about the person's personality as well as the reason the person was selected as the subject. Profiles presented in a question-and-answer format should be entered Category E14 Q&A Interview. *Submit 1 article.*

E13 – Q & A INTERVIEW

Entries must demonstrate knowledge of the topic and contain interesting questions and responses that shed light on the subject. Entries must be in a Q & A format. *Submit 1 article.*

E14 – SPECIAL SERIES

Entries must be a series of related articles with a minimum of two installments. The series should have a clearly identified theme and all articles should relate to them but also be able to stand alone. The series should provide in-depth information about the subject matter and its relevancy to the publication's readers and community. The series must be identified as such in the publication. *Submit entire series.*

E15 – NEWS FEATURE

Entries must be well-researched, timely and thoughtful responses to, or explanations of, recent newsworthy events, incidents or developments. The submission should enhance the reader's understanding of the issue and how it relates to the local parenting community. *Submit 1 article.*

E16 – THEMED ISSUE

Entries should consist of a single issue from the regular publication schedule that includes at least three separate editorial stories related to a unified, clearly labeled theme. A related cover should underscore the single theme aspect of the issue. Stories should present a variety of unique angles and presentations. Not open to advertising supplements. *Submit 1 copy of the complete issue.*

E17 – NON-TRADITIONAL STORY FORM FEATURE

Entries in this category embrace non-traditional means of storytelling. Articles submitted should not be in narrative form. Listicle-style articles would be appropriate in this category, as well as presentations that use other creative means of combining elements to tell a story. Entries are evaluated on the quality and effectiveness of the story structure and individual editorial components, not the design. *Submit 1 article.*

E18 – SERVICE FEATURE

Entries should exhibit strong reporting and be easily understood. Entries should give readers the information they need to accomplish something and may be on any subject, such as how to choose day care, how to save for college, etc. *Submit 1 article.*

E19 – GENERAL FEATURE WRITING

Entries must be compelling, skillfully crafted, well researched and beautifully written. Entries should establish relevance to the magazine's readers. *Submit 1 article.*

E20 – SPONSORED CONTENT

Entries should provide material that is relevant to the publication's audience and must have been produced by the staff of the submitting publication. The sponsor/purpose of the content should be clear to the reader. Article(s) may have appeared in print and/or online. *Submit a single story, or a collection of related stories focused on a single subject published all at once as a unified package. Please note: Ancillary publications are stand-alone guides, booklets or specialty magazines that are published in addition to a member's main primary publication. Ancillary publications may have appeared either in print or online (as an e-book, PDF, or similar digital publication format). Submissions in all AP categories must be entered in the circulation category of the member's primary publication, not the ancillary's circulation.*

2026 ANCILLARY PUBLICATION CATEGORIES

AP1 – ANCILLARY COVER

The cover should demonstrate intelligent and artistic use of typography, space, design and color. The art and the tease for the publication's editorial focus should support one another. Original and stock photos are acceptable, as are original and stock illustrations. *Submit 1 cover.*

AP2 – ANCILLARY OVERALL WRITING

Entries must clearly demonstrate superior writing, reporting and editorial judgment throughout. (This category is strictly editorial; design is not a consideration.) *Submit a print copy of 1 complete supplement, or a link to it online if it was only distributed digitally.*

AP3 – ANCILLARY OVERALL DESIGN

Entries must be stand-alone publications ancillary to the regular parenting publication. Entries must clearly demonstrate superior intelligent use of art, photos and space. Editorial and advertising should be clearly delineated. (This category is strictly design; editorial is not a consideration.) *Submit a print copy of 1 complete supplement, or a link to it online if it was only distributed digitally.*

2026 DIGITAL MEDIA CATEGORIES

DG1 – BLOG/BLOGGERS

Entries can be any single or multi-contributor blogs housed on the publication's website. Judges will evaluate the blog on how it serves the intended audience, frequency of posting, commitment and passion to the topic and the sense of community that surrounds the blog. The blog needs to be locally generated. *Submit the link to the blog.*

DG2 – SHORT-FORM VIDEO

Entries can consist of any video of 90 seconds or less, published either on a website or on a social media platform. Videos will be evaluated based on creativity, storytelling, usefulness of the content, and overall production value. *Upload the video file and include a link to it online.*

D3 – E-NEWSLETTER

Entries must be an emailed newsletter, displaying excellent design, content, focus and a balance of advertising and editorial. *Submit PDF or link to two editions of the same e-newsletter.*

DG4 – SOCIAL MEDIA, SINGLE PLATFORM

Entries should show effective and creative use of a single social media platform to advance the publication's editorial mission. *Submit screenshots and hyperlinks for three examples of posted content and also include a written explanation (250-words maximum) about your use of this platform and its impact.*

DG5 – BIGGEST GROWTH IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Entries should demonstrate creativity and success in growing a presence across multiple social media accounts. *Submit screenshots and hyperlinks for up to six examples of posted content, along with a list of the social accounts managed and a written explanation (250 words maximum) that explains how content was optimized for each account and how it all worked together to meet the publication's goals.*

DG6 – ONLINE DIRECTORY

Entries should provide comprehensive information in a format that helps users easily find what they might be looking for. *Submit link to the directory and a 250-word maximum written explanation.*

2026 GENERAL EXCELLENCE CATEGORIES

GE1 – BEST REDESIGNED PUBLICATION

Entries will be thoughtfully and creatively reimagined (in both editorial content and design) reflecting an understanding of the reader through current, innovative and engaging design, partnered with revitalized editorial that further engages the reader and indicates an awareness of the current times and age that we live in. *Submit 3 copies of the two issues prior to the redesign and 3 copies of the two issues after the redesign. (Each of the three judges for this category needs a separate set of the issues being submitted for consideration.) Publications distributed solely as PDF/ebook/digital editions may submit links to the required issues.*

GE2 – ANCILLARY* GENERAL EXCELLENCE

* See definition of ancillary publication in AP section. This award takes into consideration both editorial and design. Entries must be stand-alone publications that are an expansion of the regular content appearing in the primary magazine. The publication may contain advertising, but it should not consist solely of advertisements. The subject matter can be on any topic related to parenting, family, and children. Examples include education, special needs, child care, babies, teens, family travel, grandparents, etc. The ancillary publication can be distributed either separately or with the regular publication. Articles should be reported, written, edited and presented in a manner useful to local readers. *Submit 3 print copies of 1 complete supplement, or a link to it online if it was only distributed digitally. (Each of the three judges for this category needs a separate set of the issues being submitted for consideration.)*

GE3 – WEBSITE GENERAL EXCELLENCE

This award takes into consideration both editorial and design of the website. Sites must have superior visual appeal, with excellent use of color, photography and typography throughout. The design should allow for easy navigation and a high level of interactivity. Content should complement, but not duplicate the magazines and serve as a gateway to other community resources. Content should clearly establish the website as an expert parenting resource. Writing should be concise and active, written specifically for a local, online audience. Entries must be websites that are primarily developed and maintained by in-house staff members. *Submit URL, one PDF (screen shot) of the home page.*

GE4 – GENERAL EXCELLENCE

This award takes into consideration both editorial and design of the primary publication. Entries must exhibit editorial balance, planning, thoughtful pacing, and a high caliber of journalistic integrity throughout. There should be evidence of high standards in reporting, writing and editing. General Excellence winners must demonstrate a grasp of the issues within the local parenting community and beyond. Entries must demonstrate excellence in design. There should be evidence of careful attention to the quality of art, design, and space as well as general organization of the publication. *Submit 3 copies of the same 3 consecutive issues. (Each of the three judges for this category needs a separate set of the issues being submitted for consideration.) Publications distributed solely as PDF/ebook/digital editions may submit links to the required issues.*