

Top volunteers help Club survive pandemic

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The National Press Club honored dozens of members for their outstanding volunteer contributions on Friday, Dec. 18, but the unprecedented challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic required the steadfast support of the entire Club community.

The **Club suspended in-person services** from mid-March **to early June** and **struggled to generate revenue** even after the doors re-opened. Yet the Club seamlessly pivoted to online events for almost all of its newsmaker programs and continued to fulfill its mission of advancing press freedom and the journalism profession, Club President Michael Freedman said.

“This may well be a year when every single member of the National Press Club deserves recognition just for staying with us as we all have navigated the pandemic, politics, the attacks on press freedom, the attacks on journalists themselves and the national outcry for racial equity and social justice this year,” Freedman said during the **online Vivian Awards ceremony**. “Thanks to the dedication, perseverance and courage of our Club staff, our Club leadership, our team leaders and our members, we have proven the resiliency of the National Press Club in 2020.”



The Vivian Awards were presented through a Zoom event on Dec. 18. The namesake of the award, former Club President Vivian Vahlberg (upper left corner), attended. Photo: Laura Coker

The Club conducted 50 programs, 40 of which occurred virtually, while pulling off its highest profile events, such as the **Fourth Estate Award**, the **Club journalism awards**, and scholarship presentations.

Original Vivian attends

The namesake of the Vivian Awards, the first female Club president, Vivian Vahlberg, attended the ceremony for the first time in 35 years. Vahlberg established the award for the Club’s top volunteers during her presidency in 1982, calling it the “hard work and inspiration award.” The awards were named for Vahlberg after she left the presidency.

In remarks to open the ceremony, Vahlberg recounted the difficulties the Club encountered in 1982 as it operated in the midst of a major remodeling of the National Press Building. The work, which had to be revised and refinanced, created significant challenges – including hosting a luncheon with then-Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in a dilapidated ballroom.

Vahlberg said she saw similarities between then and now.

“I have really been admiring from afar all that you have managed to do this year given all of the challenges and the vicissitudes of the year,” said Vahlberg, who was a reporter with the Daily Oklahoman when she served as Club president. “You really show how strong the National Press Club is and what an amazing team of people volunteer so much talent and time to make good things happen. “We can do together at the Club things that we could not do separately...that really makes it worthwhile.”

Krug Award winners: Noone, Kotok

Two Club members won the Berny Krug Award, which recognizes long-term service to the Club and is the organization's highest volunteer honor.

Jim Noone, commander of American Legion Post 20, which is based at the Club, was recognized for his efforts to organize and execute several Club events that focused on the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, including interviews with **President Harry Truman's grandson** and **former Sen. Bob Dole**.

"We salute Jim Noone for all of his service over so many years to the National Club," Freedman said.

Alan Kotok, chair of the Club Photography Team, was the other Krug Award winner for his decades of service to the team and his outstanding work this year, Freedman said.

"When we made that now so-often-mentioned pivot, Alan did go from in-person photography to screenshots, and he was prolific, along with other members of his team," Freedman said. "That team did complete the annual photo exhibit in fine fashion this year. It was really a banner year for Alan and his team."

Cosgrove Award winner: Gil Klein

The John Cosgrove Award -- named after the Club's 1961 president and recognizing ongoing contributions to the Club by a former president -- went to Gil Klein. Klein, who was Club president in 1994, is the Club historian, chair of the History & Heritage Team and the author of the book, **"Tales from the National Press Club."** He also was deeply involved in several initiatives and commemorations this year.

"He has been prolific in his writing for the NPC Wire this year, even though he's not a member of the NPC Wire Team, he has helped secure guests, he was a force of nature throughout the year with his enthusiasm," Freedman said.

Vivian Award winners

Elissa Free, Bill Lord, Mike Hempen, Mark Hamrick, Adam Konowe, Tom McMahon, Debra Silimeo, Edward Segal, Marc Wojno, Jim Kuhnhen, Glenn Marcus, Danny Selnick, Kevin Wensing Aaron Cohen, Joyce Frieden, Deanna McCray James, Alicia Mundy, Elisa Free, Peter Copeland, David Anderson, Bob Weiner, Andrew Schneider, Edwin Grosvenor, Bill Earle, Viola Gienger, Elizabeth Hagedorn, Peter Urban, Victoria Gaither, Marshall Cohen, Al Teich, Maggie Mulvihill, Lorna Aldrich, Bill Miller, Amy Fickling, Heather Forsgren Weaver, Jonathan Salant, Bill McCloskey, Mark Schoeff Jr., Donna Leinwand Leger, Louise Walsh, Justin Duckham, Wes Pippert, Kristina Groennings, Daniel Moore, Joe Luchok, Eleanor Herman, Gillian Rich.