

Miami Herald

South Florida journalists honored with Columbus High's Media Excellence Awards

KATHLEEN DEVANEY - KDEVANEY@MIAMIHERALD.COM

03/16/2015 5:46 PM | Updated: 03/17/2015 9:20 PM



Will Manso of WPLG-Channel 10 receives his award for best sports reporter during CCNN Live's Media Excellence Awards. MARC ALTIERI / ALTIERI PRODUCTIONS

The cafeteria of Christopher Columbus High School in Westchester, which typically houses 1,500 boys for lunch, was transformed Saturday into an elegant gala with nearly 300 attendees for the second annual Media Excellence Awards.

The event was designed to mimic the Emmys, as awards were given to local professional journalists based on different reporting categories.

Students from CCNN Live, the school's student news network, selected the nominees based on the South Florida news industry reporters who inspire them to pursue journalism. A few weeks prior to the event, students of Columbus and Our Lady of Lourdes, the all-girls sister school, voted to select the winners. Both are private Catholic schools.

NBC6 entertainment reporter Roxanne Vargas emceed the event. She said the media awards were more importantly a night to honor the academic excellence that CCNN Live produces daily.

Among the nominees present: Lisa Petrillo of CBS4, who was nominated for the entertainment reporter category; John Morales of NBC6 for best weather personality; and Calvin Hughes of WPLG-Local 10 for best news anchor.

Before the category awards were announced, a Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Andres "Andy" Triay, a 1981 Columbus alum who is an Emmy-winning producer for CBS News. Throughout his career, Triay has covered Hurricane Andrew, the first Gulf War, the Boston Marathon bombing, the rise of ISIS and more.

Bob Orr, another honorary guest and one of Triay's CBS colleagues, presented Triay with the award.

When the MEA was created last year by Miguel "Mick" Maspons and Jorge Ortega, both Columbus alumni from the class of 1981, the goal of the event was to honor the local media professionals, and to double as a fundraiser for CCNN Live.

"I felt that a lot of organizations at Columbus that were not sports were not getting recognition from the outside community that they deserved," said Maspons, the awards chairman.

David Perez, the 16-year-old vice-president of CCNN Live, said the awards offer an excellent opportunity for him and his peers to network with professionals from within the industry. He hopes the event will help raise money for 15 of the best CCNN Live students to travel to San Diego for the Student Television Network's Crazy 8s competition, in which the student team will have eight hours to produce an entire news broadcast on a given topic.

"If we go to competitions in different states then we can gain experience of advancing further in the industry," Perez said.

Christopher Columbus Marketing Director Cristina Cruz said the awards event is still in its infancy stage.

"It has been able to pay for itself for the last two years and make a small profit. We hope to grow it so that it can become a considerable source of funding for the program," Cruz said.

Over the past few years, CCNN Live has received many accolades under the direction of Columbus High teachers Christina Hidalgo and Omar Delgado. In 2014, CCNN Live was named the "Best Daily High School News Show" by the National Scholastic Press Association, and was also awarded a first-place sports feature from the Student Television Network.

Delgado, Hidalgo and the students success was recognized at the event.

Mariana Rodriguez, an entertainment reporter for Telemundo 51, said she recently reported live from a red-carpet event beside a competing CCNN Live student team.

"They inspire me to make me want to do my job better," Rodriguez said.

Will Manso, a WPLG sports reporter, said he frequently sees the CCNN Live students, whom he referred to as his "peers," at Miami Heat games.

On stage, Manso joked, "This is my 16th year. Let me make it to 20 and then you can have my job."

AND THE WINNERS ARE ...

- **News anchor:** Pam Giganti, NBC6
- **General assignment reporter:** Laura Rodriguez, NBC6
- **Investigative reporter:** John Turchin, WPLG-Channel 10
- **Sports reporter:** Will Manso, WPLG-Channel 10
- **Entertainment reporter:** Mariana Rodriguez, Telemundo51
- **Weather personality:** John Morales, NBC6
- **Use of social media:** Joy Taylor, FM 104.3 The Ticket
- **On-air radio personality:** Lucy Lopez, Power 96/CBS Radio

- **Best print writer:** JT Wilcox, South Florida High School Sports
- **Local news station of the year (English):** WPLG-Channel 10
- **Local news station of the year (Spanish):** Telemundo51