

November 29, 2017

To the selection committee:

From his work on the board of SPJ Colorado to his time at the Fort Collins Coloradoan to striking it out with news start-up Denverite, Adrian has thoughtfully and enthusiastically pursued a path to sustainable, high-impact journalism.

I first worked with Adrian in Fort Collins. He came to our news organization as an intern and we later hired him to report on growth in Northern Colorado.

Adrian found threads in data points that illustrated how our region was changing, but only as the backbone of a great enterprise story. He successfully incorporated "real people" into his work, including in this story about how [members of a vulnerable population were asked to repay the government for food stamps they received in error.](#)

Adrian built an interactive graphic that allowed digital readers to see the food stamp commitment across the country and made the connection to the state legislature, which expressed a commitment to making a fix.

He also made sense of a Northern Colorado development that stirred the hearts of wide readership upon publication: [Northern Colorado's boom built on former farmland](#).

The lede pulled readers in and the story continued to get stronger as it progressed. It won first place for "[news reporting — single story](#)" in the SPJ regional contest. Adrian employed multiple data-centric reporting tools for this story, including Google Earth, mapping functionality and audio.

Adrian has always understood that readers consume journalism in different ways and he is consistently looking for opportunities to engage.

If you'll allow, a bit of a backstory. Adrian express an interest in the Coloradoan's new Growth & Data Reporting position while he was still an intern, and we initially turned him down. He was persistent, and again expressed his desire to fill this specific role some time later. He made a compelling case, and more important, stayed with an opportunity he was passionate about.

Adrian made the beat work, reporting and writing meaningful stories during his time at the Coloradoan. I believe he will continue to do so as his reporting journey continues, and I am confident he will benefit from time in the investigative reporting track offered by the Scripps Howard Foundation.

Respectfully,

Lauren Gustus

lgustus@star-telegram.com

Executive Editor/Vice President for News

Fort Worth Star-Telegram/McClatchy