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# Announcing the winners of the Texas Social Media Awards

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By **Peter Mongillo**  
 AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

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A cookie promoter, environmental activists, an entertainer - the diversity of the winners of this year's Texas Social Media Awards reflect the rapid evolution of the field. The second annual awards ceremony on March 14 will recognize their work in a world that begins with, but is not limited to, online tools such as Facebook and Twitter. An overall winner also will be announced.

In the year since the awards were first held, social media sites increasingly have become a part of daily life. "We've gone from people who were early adopters and having fun with the technology to people using it for business and nonprofits in ways I've never even thought of before," says American-Statesman social media editor Robert Quigley.

Quigley, Statesman food writer and active social media user Addie Broyles and last year's overall winner Michelle Greer, senior communications manager at Rackspace Hostings, chose winners from more than 150 nominees. We asked each winner to share a Twitter-sized thought on social media; a few were not able to respond by our deadline. Responses are edited slightly for readability. Winners are in Austin unless otherwise noted.

Joshua Baer and the Capital Factory ([capitalfactory.com](#))

The Capital Factory provides seed money and mentoring to local startups. Baer is managing director. Founder of OtherInbox, he serves on the board of Greenling Organic Delivery.

"Because of Twitter and Facebook, it's like I have my own personal version of the Internet."

Brian Brushwood ([shwood.squarespace.com](#))

Touring with his "Bizarre Magic Show," he hosts "Scam School," which he drove to the top of the podcast charts using Twitter and Digg.

Ashley Cass ([birdsbarbershop.tumblr.com](#))

Cass is event coordinator for Bird's Barbershop.

"Social media has changed the way we communicate entirely. Now everyone knows what you love. It's the best, most efficient way for small businesses to reach their fans."

Jennie Y. Chen ([austindogfriendly.com](#))

Chen runs Keep Austin Dog Friendly, which utilizes social media to connect the dog-loving community. She also used social media to organize last year's Cupcake Smackdown.

"Social creatures use social media to connect. Nothing is more important (than) the relationships we build with people we connect ... online or offline."

J.R. Cohen ([facebook.com/WeSLGT](#))

Houston-based Cohen, who runs the Coffee Groundz coffee shop, founded Support Local/Grow Together, a movement dedicated to boosting local businesses.

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"I can help others, bring attention to a deserving person/cause. I can engage, interact with people online and connect them offline."

Jenn Deering Davis and Hayes Davis of Cheaptweet ([cheaptweet.com](http://cheaptweet.com))

Cheap Tweet tracks coupons and discounts available on Twitter.

"A platform for all / Ideas are our currency / We talk in public."

Alan Graham ([mlfnow.org/blog](http://mlfnow.org/blog))

Graham uses social media to tell the stories of people he helps as founder of Mobile Loaves and Fishes.

"Homelessness is a profound disconnectedness from self, family and community! Social media is a powerful viral tool that connects people heart to heart. That simple!"

Mark 'Rizzn' Hopkins ([siliconangle.com](http://siliconangle.com))

Dallas-based editor-in-chief of tech magazine SiliconANGLE, Hopkins was previously associate editor at the influential tech blog Mashable.

Evan Jenkins ([cookiedelivery.com](http://cookiedelivery.com))

Jenkins started at Tiff's Treats three years ago delivering cookies, and has since helped the local company connect with thousands through Twitter and Facebook.

"I believe Twitter is so important because it offers an unadulterated look at what people really think of our service and product. If we resist the dangerous temptation to strictly 'sell, sell, sell,' then we can engage with customers in a meaningful conversation, and not overwhelm them with sales pitches."

Cali Lewis ([geekbrief.tv](http://geekbrief.tv))

Lewis, who lives in Dallas, hosts the popular video podcast GeekBrief.TV, which helps bridge the gap between hardcore tech fans and more casual followers.

"Social media accelerates the news delivery window and shifts the power to those who embrace their audience and WANT to have a two-way conversation."

Livestrong ([livestrongblog.org](http://livestrongblog.org))

Lance Armstrong, Livestrong CEO Doug Ulman and online community evangelist Brooke McMillan were all nominated for their ability to spread their message through Twitter and Facebook.

Ulman: "Social media is transforming philanthropy and social entrepreneurship. Social media equals social change."

Hugh MacLeod ([gapingvoid.com](http://gapingvoid.com))

Alpine-based MacLeod uses social media to promote his cartoons and "cube grenades," which challenge us to find gratification in the workplace.

"Social media: It's cheap, it's easy and it's global. Old media isn't."

Tolly Moseley ([thataustingirl.blogspot.com](http://thataustingirl.blogspot.com))

Moseley, who blogs at Austin Eavesdropper, organizes Austin blogger meet-ups.

"In my case, social media has actually helped foster more in-person connections than virtual ones, because I use it so much for event planning. And that's the best part — watching people make friends, launch businesses, etc., because of lots and lots of typing I did on the computer."

Jennifer Navarrete ([jennifernavarrete.com](http://jennifernavarrete.com))

The founder of the San Antonio Podcasters Group is at the forefront of social media in her community.

Leslie Nichols ([austincitylimits.org](http://austincitylimits.org))

Nichols, an associate producer at KLRU, uses social media to connect with fans and post updates about "Austin City Limits."

"Social media tears down walls. In the past, we'd have to pay or coax others to tell the public the ACL story — now we just do it ourselves."

Pamela Price ([redwhiteandgrew.com](http://redwhiteandgrew.com))

The San Antonio-based freelance writer has a nationally recognized garden blog.

**EVENTS THIS WEEK »**

Austin Outdoor Fitness Boot Camp at Dougherty Arts Center, Fri, Mar 26 5:30a

ABC SALE: A Big Consignment at First Evangelical Free Church of Austin, Fri, Mar 26 7:00a

Technology Advisors Group (TAG) at Austin Club, Fri, Mar 26 7:00a

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"Social media offers me a quick, near-constant and virtual 'high-touch' connection with my far-flung readers for feedback AND inspiration."

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Dara Quackenbush ([daraquackenbush.com](http://daraquackenbush.com) )

and Cindy Royal ([cindyroyal.com](http://cindyroyal.com) )

Texas State University's Quackenbush, a senior lecturer in public relations, and Royal, assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, have raised the school's profile by promoting social media.

Quackenbush: "Social media provides two-way communication between an organization and its customers, creating a more meaningful relationship between the two." Royal: "Participation is the key to SM. It's about creating and connecting, building community. You get what you give. Plus it's fun, so why not?"

Trey Ratcliff ([StuckInCustoms.com](http://StuckInCustoms.com) )

Ratcliff has developed a community of photographers and fans through his blog, which features high dynamic range photography.

"Social media helps creators connect directly with consumers — and, nowadays, we are all both creators and consumers!"

Mando Rayo ([tacojournalism.com](http://tacojournalism.com) )

Rayo finds Austin's best tacos through his blog and uses social media to build support for the United Way.

"Social media opens doors to engage in new, innovative ways; connects people to organizations and businesses ; breaks down walls/barriers, makes people real and it's fun!"

Grace Rodriguez ([twitter.com/gracerodriguez](https://twitter.com/gracerodriguez) )

Rodriguez uses social media as a principal of the Houston marketing/promotion company AYN Brand as well as to help causes including YouthVote and Twestival.

Sheila Scarborough ([tourismcurrents.com](http://tourismcurrents.com) )

A writer, speaker and blogger, Scarborough is co-founder of Tourism Currents, which teaches the tourism industry about social media.

"Social media means you have a hand-picked network available worldwide, 24 hours a day, for the important or mundane questions in life."

Kevin Tuerff and Valerie Davis ([GreenDetectives.net](http://GreenDetectives.net) )

Tuerff and Davis run Enviromedia, which uses social media to help clients and the public learn about climate change policy.

"It's a crazy green world. Word-of-mouth is critical for brand trust, behavior change. For EnviroMedia and our clients, social media is a must-do."

Stephen Torrence ([youtube.com/captainvalor](http://youtube.com/captainvalor) )

Torrence, a senior at Texas Tech University, produces videos that translate popular songs into sign language. They have been watched more than 1 million times.

"Social media is the next evolution of human consciousness, creativity and interaction. It open doors, hearts, minds and possibilities 24/7."

Josh Williams ([gowalla.com](http://gowalla.com) )

Williams is a co-founder and CEO of Austin-based Gowalla, a location-based social network.

"The promise of the social Web is that we can nourish more meaningful relationships with friends than ever before. Of course, we only get out in proportion to what we put in."

Shawn P. Williams ([dallasouthnews.org](http://dallasouthnews.org) )

Williams edits the Dallas South blog. "Social media gives a voice to those (who) were shut out in the past. It also connects folks who would otherwise be strangers or estranged."

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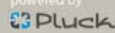
Congratulations to all the winners.

It was tough narrowing down the field to 25. We had more than 150 nominees, and several worthy people didn't make the cut.

I want to thank Michelle Greer and Addie Broyles for helping to judge the awards.

- Robert Quigley  
Social media editor  
Austin American-Statesman

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