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PRESS RELEASE: FCJ ANNOUNCES JUDGES FOR ANNUAL LOCAL MEDIA EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The Forum of Community Journalists (FCJ) is proud to announce the names of the judges for the final round of judging for the 2015 Annual Local Media Excellence Awards. The awards ceremony will be held in Gauteng in June.

Preliminary judging was done by experts in the field of local journalism and included the likes of Kennedy Mudzuli, Naushad Kahn, Roelien Vorster, Sipho Siso, Ingrid Pepler, Janine Viljoen, Theo Eybers and Tobie van der Berg,” says Hugo Redelinghuys convener of the preliminary judging.

This judging was done last week and the judges had to sift through hundreds of entries in 20 categories to find the top 5 in each category.

The final judging will take place on Thursday 28 April. The five judges who have the very difficult task of selecting the winners are Mandi Botha, Cliff Buchler, Marlene Malan, Zolani Sinxo and Fanie Groenewald (convener).

Who are the judges?

Zolani Sinxo holds a B-Tech Degree and a National Diploma in Journalism from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town. He started to develop an interest in writing and storytelling at a young age after he co-authored a folk tales children book in 2005 titled *Our Stories, Amabali Ethu*.

After graduating, Zolani worked at various government institutions such as the Cape Winelands District Municipality, Government Communication and Information Systems (GCIS) and South African Local Government Association (SALGA), where he worked in the marketing and communication departments specialising in media liaison and editorial management.

His passion for developmental journalism saw him being a co-founder of a community newspaper in Stellenbosch, Umlambo News. Zolani is currently working for Group Editors as a journalist for the *George Herald* and is also the editor of *Idinga* community newspaper.

DIRECTORS

Marita Meyer – **Chairperson**, Ben Burger – **Vice-chairperson**,

Graeme Campbell, Hugo Redelinghuys, Tobie van den Bergh, Hennie Stander, Isabel Venter, Tharine Hurter

About the FCJ:

The FCJ (Forum of Community Journalists) is an independent, non-racial and voluntary non-profit company striving to promote and express the interests of all journalists employed on a permanent or freelance basis at regional, local and community newspapers, magazines and online community publications in South Africa.

Mandi Botha started her career at *Die Volksblad*, but after several excursions eventually found her niche in local and community journalism. From 2006 till 2012, she was editor of the *George Herald* and during this time also served on the Caxton Editors' Forum.

After that she took on the enormous task of establishing a local paper in the Southern Cape for Media24, called *Eden Express*, with editions in George, Mossel Bay and Knysna/Plett/Sedgefield. She is well-known for the high premium she puts on an attractive, well-produced paper and although *Eden Express* eventually did not make it financially, the publication is indeed remembered for the good read it was, and being well-edited in terms of copy and appearance.

A benefit of local journalism is that the community gets to know and appreciate the people behind the paper, so Mandi, in her own words, mercifully has bread as well as cheese on the table again, and currently works as a freelance copywriter and manuscript editor.

Cliff Buchler is a former managing editor in the Caxton group. He is now retired and living in George with his wife Heidi. He still writes weekly columns for *The Citizen* and newspapers in the Group Editors stable. He also fills in with sub-editing where the need arises. He has judged in the Caxton Excellence Awards over the years and has been in the industry for over 40 years.

After having obtained degrees in Afrikaans, English and German at Stellenbosch University, **Marlene Malan** was a copywriter at advertising agencies and a translator and language practitioner at Naspers for 15 years, before joining the world of newspaper journalism, writing for *Die Burger*, *TygerBurger* and *Rapport* for almost 20 years.

She courageously decided on a freelance career as journalist, translator and language practitioner almost three years ago, and swapped Cape Town for Prince Albert in the Karoo.

Currently she works for various national magazines and newspapers, and locally for *Oudtshoorn Courant* and *Die Hoorn*. In January she was appointed co-editor of Prince Albert's 104-year old newspaper, *Prince Albert Friend/Vriend*.

Her main interests are human interest stories, actuality, environmental issues, crime and local politics. She believes in the power of the local media as the eyes and ears of societies and people who would never be heard, if it weren't for the role of these journalists who work impossible hours, earning ridiculously low salaries.

In her free time she buys and sells books – fiction, non-fiction, poetry, children's and youth books – to get the *platteland* reading.

She is married to the poet and translator Daniel Hugo.

Fanie Groenewald, an ex-journalist at *Beeld* and former teacher, was a lecturer at the Department of Journalism, Tshwane University of Technology from 1995 until his retirement in June 2012. His main responsibilities were the practical training of students in partnership with the community newspaper, *Rekord* as well as the subject Media Law.

Over the years he has regularly addressed journalists, especially of the community press, on Media Law issues.

He is an experienced adjudicator of press competitions, inter alia the Oscar Frewin Awards of the Middelburg/eMalahleni Caxton group, the Caxton Awards, the LIN Awards of the independent community newspapers in Limpopo and the MDDA-Sanlam Local Media Awards.

He is a member of the Panel of Adjudicators of the Press Council (nominated by the Forum of Community Journalists).

He and his wife have been living in Oyster Bay in the Eastern Cape since March 2013.

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Press release prepared by Ben Burger, FCJ Director, Western Cape