

METCALF INSTITUTE FOR MARINE AND ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

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PRESS RELEASE

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Metcalf Institute Awards \$75,000 Grantham Prize to *USA Today* Reporters

Winning Series Reveals Toxic Air in Schools

NARRAGANSETT, R.I., July 6, 2009 -- Blake Morrison and Brad Heath of *USA Today* are the 2009 winners of the [Grantham Prize for Excellence in Reporting on the Environment](#). Morrison and Heath will receive the \$75,000 prize for "The Smokestack Effect: Toxic Air and America's Schools," their data-intense investigative series on industrial pollution near schools.

Grantham Prize jurors described the series as taking "science-based journalism to a new level."

The reporting team worked with academic researchers to pool government data on industrial polluters near 127,800 schools in an effort to identify potential toxic hot spots. Their findings were incredible: The models indicated that the air outside thousands of schools could be at least twice as toxic as the air in nearby neighborhoods, and sometimes ten times higher.

The research was integrated into an online, interactive database, allowing people to look up schools and get an estimate of how the air quality at their local schools compared to other areas. The methodologies and limitations for the difficult assessment of toxic exposure were carefully described in the series' companion Web site, and a list of frequently asked questions was added to help readers understand how to interpret and act upon the findings.

Jurors also selected three Award of Special Merit recipients, each receiving a \$5,000 award:

- Tad Fettig, Karena Albers, & Veronique Bernard of *kontentreal*, for the six-part series, "e²: transport," part of "e²: The Economies of Being Environmentally Conscious," which aired on PBS affiliates across the U.S. With a presentation that the prize jurors described as a "prime example of the transformative power of television," the *kontentreal* team used each episode to explore global transportation innovations and the people behind them, ranging from a public-private bike initiative in Paris to policies aimed at offsetting the effects of the aviation industry.

- Andrew Nikiforuk, for his examination of the tar sands of Alberta, Canada in his book “Tar Sands: Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent.” Canada is the fifth largest exporter of oil in the world and home to the world’s largest energy project. Published by Greystone Books, “Tar Sands” examines the open-pit sand mines and what they mean for the future of Canada. The jurors described Nikiforuk as "a careful and diligent researcher and writer," whose book is a “valuable and timely reminder of the mounting environmental costs of our addiction to oil."
- Susanne Rust & Meg Kissinger, for the series “Chemical Fallout” in *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. After months of consulting with scientists and studying government databases and peer-reviewed research, Rust and Kissinger determined that the EPA allows companies to keep information about hazardous chemicals secret, despite rules mandating disclosure. They also found evidence that an EPA program designed to warn the public about toxic chemicals favors the chemical industry in reporting possible threats. Grantham Prize jurors noted that “‘Chemical Fallout’ exemplifies the good that journalists can do given the time and resources."

The winner and Award of Special Merit recipients will be formally recognized at an October 5, 2009, prize ceremony and seminar to be held in the Knight Conference Center at the Newseum in Washington, D.C.

The [Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting](#) and the Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment created the Grantham Prize in 2005. The prize honors the work of one journalist or team of journalists for exemplary reporting on the environment. The annual prize is open to nonfiction originally published or broadcast within the U.S. or Canada in the previous calendar year.

The Grantham Prize is funded by Jeremy and Hannelore Grantham through [The Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment](#). The foundation supports environmental research and conservation programs internationally.

Metcalf Institute was established at the [University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography](#) in 1997 with funding from the Belo Corporation, the Providence Journal Charitable Foundation, the Philip L. Graham Fund, and the Telaka Foundation. Named for the late Michael P. Metcalf, a visionary in journalism and publisher of The Providence Journal Bulletin, the Metcalf Institute is a leading provider of science immersion opportunities for journalists to improve the accuracy and clarity of environmental reporting.