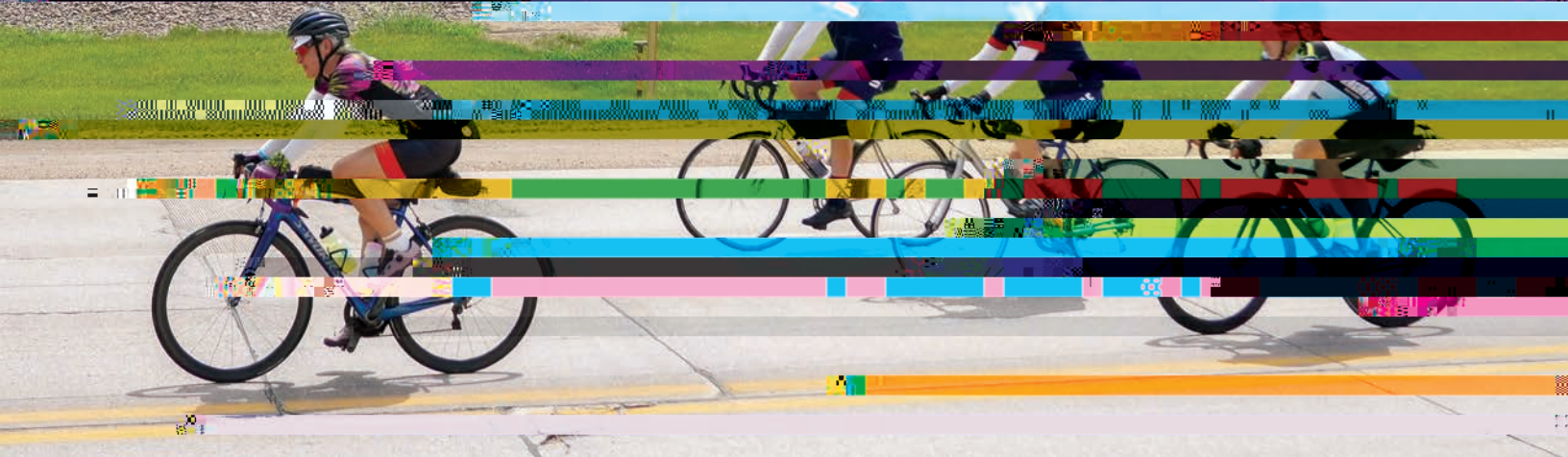
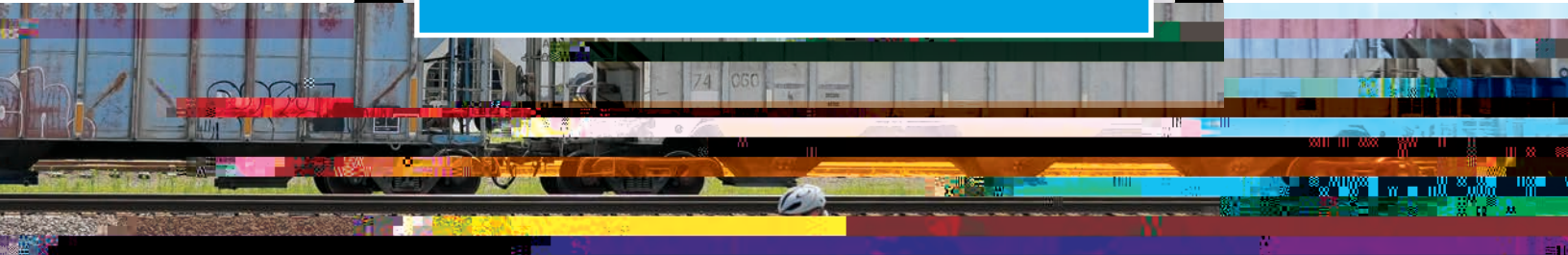




USA TODAY  
NETWORK

# IMPACT REPORT

2023






**L**ocal newspapers are the most relied-upon and trusted media source in journalism. In this impact report, we highlight a few significant stories published around the USA TODAY Network, which includes more than 200 newsrooms and hundreds of journalists across the country. We also show the broader reach of our newsrooms, from hosting community dialogues and raising funds for nonprofits to partnering with philanthropists to amplify underserved voices.



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## Enquirer: City taxpayers lost \$500,000

The Cincinnati Enquirer showed readers how taxpayers had lost out on \$500,000 in a plan to sell the city's railroad line to Norfolk Southern. Public records showed money that should have gone to the city was diverted to help the railroad pay for a campaign to promote the railroad sale to voters.

Two months after the Enquirer exposed the deal, noting that a 2002 charter amendment banned taxpayers' money from being used for political purposes, the board overseeing the railway voted to return the \$500,000 to the city's taxpayers.

## Enquirer: City police gun range

The Cincinnati Enquirer chronicled the impact of a city police gun range on Lincoln Heights, a predominantly Black suburb that backs up to the range.

The Enquirer spoke to residents and made a video so readers could see and hear what it's like to live nearby. Afterward, Hamilton County and the city agreed to move the gun range.

Commissioners watched the video at their meeting. Said a commissioner: "That video is pretty powerful."

## Reporter: Hospital reduced cancer drug cost

A Colorado hospital sliced the cost of a cancer drug after acknowledging it had been overcharging patients and insurance companies for years. The move came after a Fort Collins Coloradoan investigation into the health system's billing for a Fort Collins woman's treatment.

The health care system reduced the cost of Zoladex 3.6 mg from more than \$9,000

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After the Iowa Legislature adopted a law banning depictions of sex acts in schoolbooks, the Des Moines Register committed to detailed tracking of its impact on Iowa districts.

Reporters started by obtaining a list of 374 books that the Urbandale Community School District believed could violate the law and merit banning, including classics



Changes are coming to Indiana's alcohol enforcement system after the Indianapolis Star exposed how weak enforcement by the Indiana Alcohol & Tobacco Commission has contributed to a "Wild West" atmosphere at some Indianapolis bars.

Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb proposed a 35% boost in funding for the chronically underfunded ATC, and state officials proposed new policies intended to crack down on problem bars and the creation of a task force to target nightclubs known for violence.

Calls for changes came after we identified more than 600 reports of bar-related violence, including 49 homicides, since 2016.

The Indianapolis Star went to the Badger family's home just days after Terry Badger died by suicide. The 13-year-old baseball phenom had been bullied every day at school. After Indianapolis Star's story ran, Indiana lawmakers passed an anti-bullying bill in Terry's honor.

A state lawmaker told the Indianapolis Star that the bill had been stuck until he brought the story about Terry to statehouse chambers and passed it to legislators: "I handed them a copy of Terry's story. I

ferences, on podcasts and radio shows. Nearly 1,000 flyers were distributed across 11 pediatric offices in the Louisville area to educate parents on the four leading causes of death in athletes.





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in moving expenses.

Conley, who sits on the House Transportation Committee, contacted the government liaison for the turnpike authority and met with the deputy director less than 48 hours after the agency unveiled the map of the proposed new toll road.

Without the reporting by The Oklahoman, the transaction might have gone unnoticed.

ALBABA S J E  
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The Palm Beach Post has covered the dark, complex story that is the Jeffrey Epstein case steadily since its inception in 2006. That's when a grand jury convened by then-Palm Beach County State Attorney Barry Krischer emerged with only a single charge of solicitation of prostitution against Epstein — what a "John" might face.

The series of articles focused on senior living violence, detailing how assisted living residents with dementia have killed other residents. Staff and residents have been sexually assaulted. Another article detailed how senior living facilities are often under-

death of Jakarah Lopez-Moore, the 16-year-old whose body was found in the woods over a month after she went missing.

Following the attention on Jakarah's case, Gov. Kathy Hochul signed a bill to establish a task force on missing women and girls who are Black, Indigenous or people of color. This task force will work to develop new policies and address disparities in the investigations of missing BIPOC women and girls across New York state.







... (6 ... ) ... 22 ... \$25,000 ... PAUL KUEHNEL/YORK DAILY RECORD

# 2024

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# VIP

Seeing democracy in action is powerful. And that power was on display leading up the New Hampshire presidential primary when Seacoastonline, USA TODAY and the USA TODAY Network hosted Republican candidate town halls. The format was voter-centric, allowing the audience to directly question unscripted candidates.

The event illustrated how the USA TODAY Network’s local and national elections coverage will be different in 2024.

Newsrooms will deliver on the promise to enrich our communities by focusing election coverage through the lens of the people we serve, not the candidates. Seacoastonline, the digital home of the The Portsmouth Herald, did just that with the Republican town halls.

And we’re investing to make it happen.

A new fellowship program brings on 27 journalists across specialties. We’ll have statehouse coverage in all 50 states.

We will help readers, viewers and listeners become empowered, informed and ready to make the best choices for themselves and their families at the ballot box.

Voter-centric coverage is already happening or in the works. Consider:

- **The Des Moines Register Political Soapbox:** Opportunities to meet candidates are dwindling in a polarized time when many candidates choose donor events and avoid debates. The Register fills the breach with its Political Soapbox at the Iowa State Fair. Candidates, including presidential candidates in 2023, speak for 20 minutes each.
- **Nashville Mayoral Debates:** The Tennessean helped organize The Nashville Mayoral Debates, the premier event of the municipal elections. The top-tier of the dozen candidates participated initially, followed by a runoff debate.
- **Statewide Arizona elections:** The Arizona Republic is supporting an effort by the Arizona Media Association to organize candidate debates for all statewide and congressional races, including U.S. Senate.

Additionally, journalists are analyzing critical election tools to ensure reader friendliness: voter guides, polling pages, results modules, beat assignments and convention coverage. We’ll ask: Does the format make the voter the top priority? Does it help the user become more informed? Is this a good return on the time investment the audience has made?

Voting isn’t about waking up on Nov. 5 and casting a ballot on your way to work. It starts so much sooner, with much more at stake than the top of the ticket. What races are on your ballot? What does that tricky referendum wording mean? Vote by person or by mail? Day of or early? Are you registered?

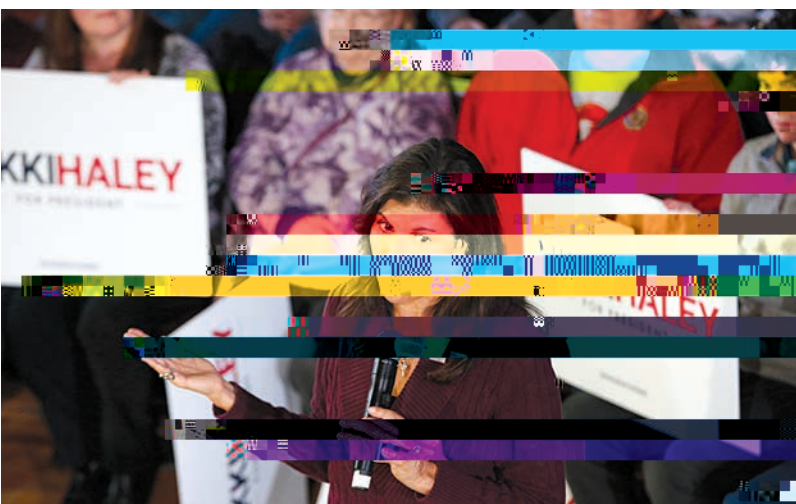
Our journalists will provide news, information, tools, guides and forums that assist the voter at each of these points by centering the voter in everything produced.

Local election coverage will include meaningful voter guides in newsrooms in more than 100 cities and towns, service journalism, community events and engagement opportunities that allow readers, viewers and listeners to get accurate, nuanced coverage of their diverse communities.

National coverage is anchored in a down-the-middle, noise-free approach. An email course will prepare readers to vote. Explanatory journalism will be published on social and in other formats where readers are. Results pages are redesigned to relay information faster.

Giving readers, viewers and listeners the information they need to fully participate at the local, state and national level is the work that matters in an election year.

*Journalists will provide news, information, tools, guides and forums that center the voter in everything we do.*



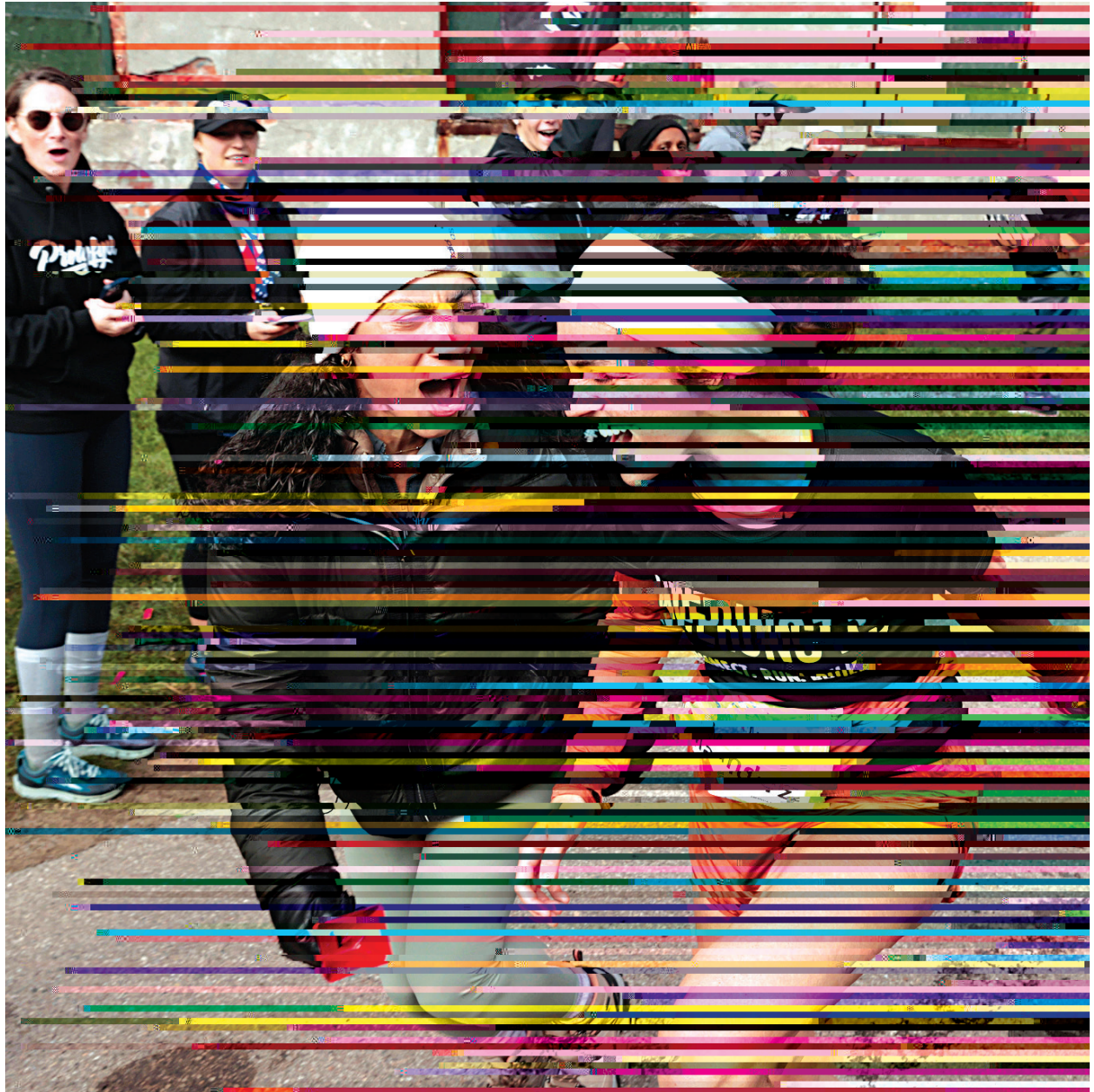
2024

**T**he Des Moines Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, known as RAGBRAI, just celebrated its 50th year and has grown into one of the oldest long-distance bike challenges in the country.

Each summer, almost 30,000 cyclists set out from a point on or near the Missouri River in western Iowa and ride seven day-long routes to their destination on the Mississippi River. Iowans also like to boast that the event is the largest annual mobile party. Beer awaits at the finish line.

In Texas, more than 15,000 runners participate in the Cap10K, sponsored by the Austin American-Statesman for 46 years and counting. More than 24,000 runners in the Detroit Free Press Marathon cross the international border with Canada twice as they traverse two international borders. Participation this past year surpassed pre-pandemic levels.

Our newsrooms celebrate the places and build community where our journalists and readers meet.



*Charitable efforts and fundraising drives go to the core of what USA TODAY Network journalists do: strengthen and lift the communities they serve.*



TIM SHORTT/FLORIDA TODAY

Charitable efforts led by local newsrooms raise funds for families, individuals and neighbors in need across the country. Newsrooms in Cape Cod, Palm Beach, Indianapolis, Austin, Phoenix and elsewhere lead fundraising drives each year that have raised tens of millions of dollars to help struggling families, domestic violence survivors, the hungry and homeless, foster kids, teachers, students and others in their communities.

The service goes to the core of what USA TODAY Network newsrooms do: str...





**A**long with individual subscribers and advertisers, support from philanthropic partners enables local journalists to amplify the community-minded work produced by newsrooms in the USA TODAY Network.

With philanthropic support, we can ensure sustained coverage of key issues and topics that are top of mind to our vast audience of readers, viewers and listeners in markets throughout the country.

**Interested in exploring ideas for philanthropic support to sustain local journalism? Contact Nicole Mastrangelo ([nmastrangelo@gannett.com](mailto:nmastrangelo@gannett.com)) or Stacy Sullivan ([ssullivan@usatoday.com](mailto:ssullivan@usatoday.com)), directors of philanthropic partnerships at the USA TODAY Network.**

A a R b + Ca a F a :I

The Colorado-based Catena Foundation provides multi-year grant funding that supports coverage of Indigenous issues at the intersection of climate, culture and commerce in the Intermountain West.

The funding enabled The Arizona Republic to hire Deb Krol, a member of the Xolon (also known as Jolon) Salinan Tribe from the Central California coastal ranges. The coverage was recently awarded the National Press Foundation's Freddie Award, a Nina Mason Pulliam Environmental Reporting Award, a Society of Environmental Journalists Award, the Society of Features Journalism award and Best Beat Environmental Reporter by the Native American Journalists' Association.

A ve-part series documented the removal of four hydroelectric dams along California's Klamath River. For the Indigenous people who live along the river, the removal was the start of a process of restoring salmon and bringing back a way of life.

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tions of the city. The lack of shade on streets and sidewalks is a public health issue. The work helped spur tree-planting plans and grants to pay for it. U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., would eventually announce some \$3 million in federal funds to help.

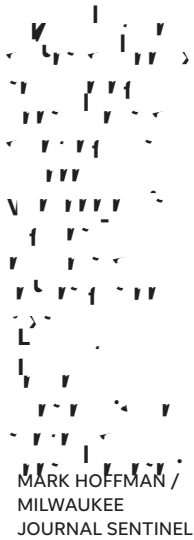
The Louisville Courier Journal received a grant to report on the lack of health care on high school sports sidelines. This project examined how schools nationally aren't doing enough to protect high school athletes, the data behind deaths during practices and games and what could be done to make safer sidelines.

## M a J a S + P C : D a a

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel devoted extensive reporting to the emerging problem of PFAS contamination in drinking water in which tap water was tested from 40 homes across Wisconsin connected to municipal water utilities. The reporting was supported with a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

The testing found 30% of those had had at least one forever chemical compound over federal recommendations, and since they were connected to a public drinking water supply — as opposed to a private supply — others in their communities also were likely to have contamination.

Republican lawmakers, who for years stripped PFAS funds from the Democratic governor's budget, voted in a \$125 million trust fund to clean up "forever chemical" contaminations across the state.



MARK HOFFMAN / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL



