HELLENIC CENTER
6506 Bells Mill Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20817 | www.helleniccenter.org

The Hellenic Center Youth Advocacy Journalism Program

Introduction: Become a Writer-Citizen

Youth advocacy journalism is a powerful form of media in which you research, report, and publish factual stories that champion a social cause, community solution, or ethical principle.

Unlike traditional journalism, which stands completely detached from its topics, advocacy journalism pairs rock-solid facts with a clear, principled point of view. It does not twist the truth. Instead, it uses verified facts to shine a light on injustice, spark dialogue, propose real solutions, and hold powerful institutions accountable.

This program transforms ordinary writing into active civic leadership. Whether you are a high school student exploring your local school district or a college undergraduate conducting deep field research, this competition invites you to step past passive observation and into the historic role of the writer-citizen. You will use the power of the written word to impact public life, defend free expression, and bridge timeless ethical foundations with modern civic action.

Hellenic Ideals in Contemporary Society: Project Frameworks

The Hellenic Center Youth Advocacy Journalism Award invites students from both our High School Division and Undergraduate Division to explore how ancient Greek values can serve as practical tools for solving modern global and local crises. Rather than treating these ideals as static history, you will use them as active, living blueprints for real-world change.

💡 **Your Choice, Your Voice:** The topics and examples below are strictly illustrative inspiration to jumpstart your creativity. Applicants in both categories are highly encouraged to choose and develop any theme, modern issue, or Hellenic ideal that connects to your personal passions and community observations.

1. Parrhesia (Παρρησία) — The Courage to Speak Up

- **What it means in plain English:** Having the courage to speak the truth out loud when it matters most, even if it is uncomfortable or risks getting you into trouble with people in charge.
- **Modern Civic Challenge:** The spread of online misinformation, fake news, digital echo chambers, and the loss of trust in public media.

- **Project Example A (Ideal for High School):** An investigative article tracking a student-led push for media literacy and digital integrity classes in local public schools. The piece would argue that a healthy community requires students who have the courage to demand transparency, question online bias, and fight for a shared baseline of truth.
- **Project Example B (Ideal for Undergraduate):** A deep-dive investigative feature examining institutional transparency, tracking modern debates over digital privacy, speech codes, or public information access, and profiling the advocacy groups working to keep civic spaces open.

2. Isigoria & Dialektike (Ισηγορία & Διαλεκτική) — Equal Voice & Real Dialogue

- **What it means in plain English:** *Isigoria* means that everyone has an equal right to speak and be heard in public. *Dialektike* is the art of working together through calm, logical, and structured conversations to find the truth, rather than resorting to toxic arguments.
- **Modern Civic Challenge:** High political polarization, social divisions, and younger generations being left out of major institutional decisions.
- **Project Example A (Ideal for High School):** A multimedia reporting project documenting the real successes and failures of youth-led advisory boards, student government bodies, or local youth councils, advocating for giving students an official, voting seat at the table on local school boards.
- **Project Example B (Ideal for Undergraduate):** A data-driven investigative report profiling local municipal governments, restorative justice initiatives, or institutional programs that have introduced structured public dialogue models to resolve community conflicts, proving that sustainable policy is built on inclusive conversation.

3. Philotimo & Arete (Φιλότιμο & Αρετή) — Community Duty & Excellence

- **What it means in plain English:** *Philotimo* is a deep, personal sense of honor and pride in taking care of the people around you—doing the right thing for your community simply because it is your duty as a human being. *Arete* means never settling for "good enough" and consistently striving to achieve moral and civic excellence in everything you do.
- **Modern Civic Challenge:** Climate change, local economic inequality, environmental neglect, or gaps in community mental health resources.

- **Project Example A (Ideal for High School):** A solution-oriented advocacy feature profiling a student-run environmental cleanup, community garden, or local high school mental health peer-support network, arguing for formal funding by framing it as a modern expression of *philotimo*.
- **Project Example B (Ideal for Undergraduate):** An in-depth investigative feature examining systemic gaps in municipal infrastructure—such as local "food deserts" or low-income housing issues—and profiling mutual aid programs or public-private partnerships working toward structural excellence (*arete*).

🌟 **A Special Note for High Schoolers: Where to Start Your Research**

If you have never written a journalistic piece or interviewed anyone before, don't worry! Every great reporter started exactly where you are right now. You don't need a professional background to write an impactful story—you just need curiosity and a willingness to ask questions. Here is a simple guide to getting started:

- **Look around your daily life:** Start with what you see every day. Is there a problem at your school, a park that needs cleaning, a local rule that seems unfair, or an incredible group of volunteers helping people in your neighborhood? Your closest surroundings are often the best source of a great story.
- **Explore your parish and church community:** Your local Greek Orthodox parish is a rich source for meaningful stories. Look at the ministries, programs, and daily operations of the church you attend:
    - **Philoptochos Initiatives:** Profile how your parish's Philoptochos society raises funds and organizes local support to fight poverty, food insecurity, or homelessness in the broader town or city.
    - **Youth Outreach & Dialogue:** Report on how GOYA or your parish's Catechetical and Sunday schools create spaces for open, safe discussions about peer pressure, identity, or mental health, showing *isigoria* and *dialektike* in action.
    - **Cultural & Language Stewardship:** Investigate how your Greek language school teachers adapt ancient heritage to keep younger generations engaged with civic values, profiling the hard work behind preserving community identity.
- **Talk to people (It's easier than you think!):** Email a school board member, talk to your parish priest, interview the president of the parish council or Philoptochos, or sit down

with a fellow youth group leader. Just tell them you are writing an article for a journalism program. Most local leaders are thrilled to talk to students who care. Come prepared with 3 to 5 simple, open-ended questions.

- **Back up your story with numbers:** Find local data to support your points. Look at your school district's public numbers, town environmental maps, or the recorded impact metrics of a church food drive (e.g., families served, pounds of food collected). Pairing real human quotes with solid data makes your argument impossible to ignore.
- **Trust your voice:** Advocacy journalism is powerful because it lets you show your passion. As long as your facts are verified and true, let your writing voice show exactly why this issue matters to the future of your community.

Official Awards

The Hellenic Center is investing directly in the next generation of writer-citizens with cash rewards and major publication opportunities.

High School Division (Grades 9–12)

- **$500 Monetary Award**
- **Guaranteed Publication:** The winning piece will be published in the *Hellenic News of America* and featured on official Hellenic Center digital platforms.

Undergraduate Division (College & University Students)

- **$1,000 Monetary Award**
- **Prominent Publication:** The winning work will be showcased prominently in the *Hellenic News of America*, featured on the Hellenic Center portal, and shared across professional cultural media networks.
- **Official Recognition:** A formal engraved plaque presented by The Hellenic Center.

Note: For winning group submissions, monetary awards will be divided equally among all listed co-authors.

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Eligibility, Timeline, Judging, and How to Apply

1. Eligibility Requirements

The competition is open to original, unpublished works of advocacy journalism across two distinct student divisions:

- **High School Division:** Current students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 (or equivalent secondary education).
- **Undergraduate Division:** Current undergraduate students enrolled part- or full-time at an accredited college, university, or community college.

Note: Group submissions (up to 3 co-authors) are permitted within the same division.

2. Application Deadline

- **Submission Due Date: Sunday, February 28th, 2027, by 11:59 PM EST.**
- All application materials must be submitted together in a single email package by the deadline. Late or incomplete submissions will not be reviewed.

3. Judging & Evaluation Focus

Submissions are evaluated by an independent panel based on four core standards:

- **Factual Integrity:** Verified claims, credible sources, and transparent attribution.
- **Hellenic Connection:** Meaningful application of an ancient Greek ideal to a modern issue.
- **Civic Voice & Advocacy:** A clear, principled perspective paired with realistic community solutions.
- **Writing Craft:** Strong organization, engaging storytelling, and adherence to formatting guidelines.

4. How to Apply

Email your completed **Application Form** (including Parental/Legal Guardian Consent if any applicant is under 18), a **brief Cover Letter** introducing yourself and your project, and your **advocacy journalism work** to **secretary@helleniccenter.org** (with a CC to **vicechair@helleniccenter.org**).

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OFFICIAL APPLICATION FORM & SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

The Hellenic Center Youth Advocacy Journalism Award
Official Application Form & Submission Cover Sheet
Application Deadline: Sunday, February 28th, 2027, by 11:59 PM EST

Section 1: Submission Category & Entry Type
1.1 Entry Division (Select One):

- High School Division *(Current students enrolled in grades 9–12 or equivalent secondary education)*
- Undergraduate Division *(Current undergraduate students enrolled part- or full-time at an accredited college, university, or community college)*

1.2 Submission Type (Select One):

- Individual Entry
- Group Entry *(Up to 3 co-authors permitted. Prize funds will be divided equally among co-authors.)*

Section 2: Applicant Profile(s)
Primary Applicant (Lead Contact)

- **Full Name:** _____
- **Date of Birth / Age:** _____ *(Applicants under 18 must complete Section 6)*
- **Mailing Address:** _____
- **Phone Number:** _____ **Email Address:** _____
- **Academic Institution:** _____
- **Current Grade / Year of Study:** _____

Co-Author 2 (If applicable)

- **Full Name:** _____
- **Date of Birth / Age:** _____ *(Applicants under 18 must complete Section 6)*
- **Phone Number:** _____ **Email Address:** _____
- **Academic Institution:** _____
- **Current Grade / Year of Study:** _____

Co-Author 3 (If applicable)

- **Full Name:** _____
- **Date of Birth / Age:** _____ *(Applicants under 18 must complete Section 6)*
- **Phone Number:** _____ **Email Address:** _____
- **Academic Institution:** _____
- **Current Grade / Year of Study:** _____

Section 3: Project Metadata

- **Project Title:** _____
- **Hellenic Ideal Utilized (Select at least one or specify your own):**
  - *Parrhesia* (The Courage to Speak Up)
  - *Isigoria & Dialektike* (Equal Voice & Real Dialogue)
  - *Philotimo & Arete* (Community Duty & Excellence)
  - Other Self-Selected Ideal: _____
- **Theme Summary (1–2 Sentences):** Briefly state how your chosen Hellenic ideal connects to your contemporary civic or social cause:

Section 4: Submission Checklist & File Requirements
Application Deadline: Sunday, February 28th, 2027, by 11:59 PM EST
How to Apply: Email all required items below in a single submission package to **secretary@helleniccenter.org** (with a CC to **vicechair@helleniccenter.org**). Incomplete or late applications will not be advanced to the evaluation panel.

- **Completed Application Form:** Filled out completely (including **Section 6: Parental / Legal Guardian Consent** if any applicant is under 18) and attached to your submission email.
- **Brief Cover Letter:** Attached as a PDF or Word file (or included in the body of your submission email) briefly introducing the author(s) and the inspiration behind your story.
- **Journalism Manuscript File:** Attached as a Microsoft Word (.docx) or Adobe PDF (.pdf) file.
    - **Word Count:** 800 to 1,500 words.
    - **Formatting:** Double-spaced, standard 12-point font (Times New Roman or Arial), 1-inch margins.
    - **Sourcing:** All data, quotes, and primary research must be explicitly attributed within the text or cited via clean hyperlinks.

Section 5: Applicant Attestation
By signing and submitting this application, I/we certify that the attached piece is an original, unpublished work produced exclusively by the author(s) listed above. I/we acknowledge that this project adheres to the factual verification standards of advocacy journalism as outlined by the program guidelines, and that all data and quotations are accurately cited.

- **Primary Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____**
- **Co-Author 2 Signature (if applicable): _____ Date: _____**
- **Co-Author 3 Signature (if applicable): _____ Date: _____**

Section 6: Parental / Legal Guardian Consent (Required for Applicants Under 18)
If the Primary Applicant or any listed Co-Author is under 18 years of age at the time of submission, a parent or legal guardian must complete and sign below for each minor applicant.

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I am the parent or legal guardian of the minor applicant named below. I have reviewed the guidelines for **The Hellenic Center Youth Advocacy Journalism Program** and grant permission for my child/ward to participate in this competition, submit their original work for evaluation, and—if selected as a winner or finalist—have their name, school, and winning entry published or promoted by The Hellenic Center, *Hellenic News of America*, and partner cultural media platforms. I also consent to my child/ward receiving any applicable award recognition or monetary prize disbursement in accordance with program rules.

Minor Applicant 1 (Primary Applicant, if under 18)

- **Minor Applicant Full Name:** _____
- **Parent / Legal Guardian Full Name:** _____
- **Relationship to Applicant:** _____
- **Parent / Guardian Phone:** _____ **Email:** _____
- **Parent / Legal Guardian Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

Minor Applicant 2 (Co-Author 2, if under 18)

- **Minor Applicant Full Name:** _____
- **Parent / Legal Guardian Full Name:** _____
- **Relationship to Applicant:** _____
- **Parent / Guardian Phone:** _____ **Email:** _____
- **Parent / Legal Guardian Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

Minor Applicant 3 (Co-Author 3, if under 18)

- **Minor Applicant Full Name:** _____
- **Parent / Legal Guardian Full Name:** _____
- **Relationship to Applicant:** _____
- **Parent / Guardian Phone:** _____ **Email:** _____
- **Parent / Legal Guardian Signature:** _____ **Date:** _____