

14 visual journalists to join local news outlets in national initiative with CatchLight and Report For America

The incoming photographers represent the largest of cohort of visual journalists the initiative has ever recruited for full-time careers in local news.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, May 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- CatchLight, in

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Ella Scott-Dean, The Fort Worth Report

partnership with Report for America, is proud to announce the selection of 14 photojournalists for the 2025 [CatchLight Local](#) Fellowship to join local newsrooms across the United States as full-time employees, beginning in July 2025. The cohort represents the largest group of visual journalists ever recruited by CatchLight and Report for America for full-time staff positions with local news organizations. The partnership previously supported five photojournalists across the state of California.

This initiative reflects CatchLight’s mission to strengthen

local news by reinvesting in visual journalism. In addition to placing photographers in local media through the CatchLight Local Fellowship, the CatchLight Local Visual Desk equips host newsrooms with tools and support to produce impactful, community-centered storytelling.

Since the program’s inception in 2019, CatchLight Local Fellows and their newsrooms have produced visual reporting that has informed public policy, advanced civic dialogue, and cultivated trust with local audiences. In 2024, the initiative produced over 300 editorial assignments and won 15 journalism awards, many recognizing innovation and depth of community engagement. Newsrooms also saw notable audience growth, while fellows reported stronger skills, confidence, and connection to their work. The CatchLight Local Visual Desk, which as of July will serve 19 newsrooms nationwide, continues to deliver meaningful impact on editorial, audience, and professional development.

“This marks a significant expansion in CatchLight’s efforts to support local and regional newsrooms that want to engage their audiences with images that truly reflect and represent their daily realities,” said Elodie Mailliet Storm, CEO of CatchLight. “The veracity of public information is being questioned more than ever before. This is why the work of visual journalists,

which at its very core is deeply rooted in building trust with communities, is so critical for civic life in the United States.”

"I am beyond excited to expand our partnership with CatchLight from five local news photographers to fourteen," said Ben Brody, Report for America's Director of Photography. "This represents a deep investment not just in our partnered newsrooms and early-career photojournalists, but in our local communities who deserve to see themselves represented with fairness, vibrance, and dignity. Audiences consume more photography than ever, and our organizations are finding innovative ways to help photojournalists engage folks where they're at, with sophisticated, relevant, and above all, honest imagery."

The incoming CatchLight Local Fellows and their host newsrooms for 2025–2026 are:

- Camilla Forte, Borderless Magazine (Chicago) - www.borderlessmag.org
- Justin Taylor, The Current GA (Savannah, Ga.) - www.thecurrentga.org
- Maria Crane, Fort Worth Report (Fort Worth, Texas) - www.fortworthreport.org
- [Decision pending], Lookout Eugene-Springfield (Eugene, Ore.) - www.lookouteugene-springfield.com
- Brett Phelps, Mirror Indy (Indianapolis) - www.mirrorindy.org
- Ellen Schmidt, MinnPost (Minneapolis) - www.minnpost.com
- Jonathan Aguilar, Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (Milwaukee) - www.milwaukeeenns.org
- Kevin Wurm, MLK50: Justice Through Journalism (Memphis, Tenn.) - www.mlk50.com
- Lauren Miller, Montana Free Press (Helena, Mont.) - www.montanafreepress.org
- Amaya Edwards, Santa Cruz Local (Santa Cruz, Calif.) - www.santacruzlocal.org
- Michael Indriolo, Signal Cleveland (Cleveland) - www.signalcleveland.org
- Annie Barker, Stocktonia (Stockton, Calif.) - www.stocktonia.org
- Christiana Botic, Verite News (New Orleans) - www.veritenews.org
- Justin Hamel, The Waco Bridge (Waco, Texas) - www.wacobridge.org

CatchLight and Report for America subsidize the cost of photojournalist salaries, covering 50% in the first year, 33% in the second, and 20% in an optional third year, while the newsrooms benefit from CatchLight's Visual Desk resources, which includes visual editing services, training and technology. Report for America also subsidized CatchLight Visual Desk participation for nine of the newsrooms.

"This fellowship offers a platform to elevate photojournalism and create work that fosters understanding and connection," said Ella Scott-Dean of The Fort Worth Report. "By strengthening our visual storytelling, we can not only inform but inspire our community, making local news more impactful and accessible to all."

This initiative is part of a broader strategy to counter the decades-long decline in visual journalism jobs across the U.S. — a trend that has left many communities without access to

high-quality, contextually relevant visual reporting. CatchLight is helping newsrooms not just sustain, but reimagine their capacity to reach local audiences across platforms.

The CatchLight Local Visual Desk was made possible with initial investments from Enlight Foundation, Hearst Foundations, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and The Kresge Foundation, in partnership with PhotoWings. Additional support has since come from Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Arnold Ventures, the MacArthur Foundation and Press Forward.

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CatchLight | www.catchlight.io

CatchLight is a visual-first media organization that leverages the power of visual storytelling to inform, connect, and transform communities. The organization invests in the future of visual storytelling through the CatchLight Local Visual Journalism Initiative, which seeks to establish the sustainability of visual journalism by providing community-based newsrooms with editorial resources, training, and strategic partnerships; the [CatchLight Global Fellowship](#), which provides grants to visual storytelling leaders worldwide; and CatchLight's public programs, including the Visual Storytelling Summit, [Night of Photojournalism](#), and Focal Point conversation series, which showcase impact in visual storytelling and expand public awareness, access, and support for the field.

Report for America | www.reportforamerica.org

Report for America is a national service program that places talented early-career journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered topics and communities across the United States and its territories. It also teaches local newsrooms how to fundraise in their communities. By creating a new, sustainable model for journalism, Report for America provides people with the information they need to improve their communities, hold powerful institutions accountable and restore trust in the media. Report for America is an initiative of The GroundTruth Project, an award-winning nonprofit journalism organization dedicated to rebuilding journalism from the ground up.

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