Sarah Wade

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Award-winning journalist, writer and researcher. Skilled at finding original stories, connecting with quality sources, turning a phrase and juggling multiple projects. Favorite kinds of work: FOIA requests, community engagement, environmental issues, exploring data, and opportunities to use my Spanish.

**AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

* 2020 Virginia Press Association News & Advertising Contest:Best in show (statewide) for daily writing; 1st place in news division for in-depth or investigative reporting, science and environmental writing, and feature story writing​​​. Shared with colleagues: Best in show for daily graphics, illustration and art; 1st place in news division for infographics and combination picture and story.
* 2021 University of Tennessee-Tennessee Press Association State Press Contest: 1st place in news division for best single feature and investigative reporting. Shared with colleagues: 1st place in news division for coronavirus features coverage.
* 2021 Investigative Reporters & Editors Gary Marx scholarship to attend the annual IRE Conference.
* 1st prize in feature category in 2018 Excel Awards (which recognize excellence in association media) for “Uporny’s Story,” a graphic feature I pitched and edited.
* Alternate for 2018-19 Fulbright-National Geographic Digital Storytelling Fellowship.

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**Freelance Reporter and Writer,** *Bristol, TN (Aug. 2021 – present)*

* Pitch and report news stories on environmental issues for local and regional publications, including Southerly, the Virginia Mercury, Cardinal News and Bristol Herald Courier.
* Stories include a scoop and an investigative deep-dive on a landfill air pollution crisis I began investigating for the Bristol Herald Courier in early 2021. Currently working with Southerly (as of Jan. 2022) to turn that reporting into a set of community resources for local residents suffering from the pollution.

**Bristol Herald Courier,** *Bristol, VA (Feb. 2020 – Aug. 2021)*

Daily Reporter

* Wrote daily stories and features about a county commission, school board and other beats (pandemic, education, health, justice, crime, etc.). Carved out an environmental beat by breaking stories about pollution violations and research on climate, wildlife and high-altitude wetlands.
* Used public records requests, sources from the community and a state environmental agency, in-depth interviews and dialogue with residents to cover an air quality crisis and its impacts on residents’ health.
* Analyzed data on 1,500+ local odor complaints from a crowdsourcing app. Completed a two-day IRE spreadsheet bootcamp; used skills gained (web scraping, string functions, pivot tables, etc.) in reporting.
* Originated a story on a hospital chaplain’s view of a COVID-19 ICU unit during the 2020-21 winter surge.
* Cultivated a diverse network of sources to break important stories.
* Regularly shot and edited photos and videos to accompany written articles.
* Won seven first place and best in show awards in the 2020 Virginia Press Association News and Advertising Contest.

**Freelance Reporter and Writer,** *Lynchburg, VA (Aug. 2019 – Feb. 2020)*

* Wrote profiles of two war veterans for the Lynchburg News & Advance. Investigated tips and submitted FOIA requests for the paper.
* Researched, wrote and edited articles for several non-journalism clients.

**Professional Sabbatical,** *Lynchburg, VA (April – Aug. 2019)*

* Left World Wildlife Fund to take a sabbatical and begin a career pivot to journalism. Attended 2019 IRE conference in Houston for coaching and inspiration.

**World Wildlife Fund**, *Washington, DC (Sept. 2013 – April 2019)*

Editor

* Wrote and edited an average of five stories per issue of WWF’s quarterly magazine (circulation ~340,000), covering a wide range of conservation topics; wrote occasional stories for the organization’s news section.
* Pitched the magazine’s first graphic (i.e., comic book-style) journalism feature, about human-tiger conflict in Russia; selected illustrator/writer and edited print version. Story was translated for use by five other WWF offices and won first prize in an association media competition.
* Launched and managed production of “Stranger Things,” an infographic-driven magazine section about bizarre wildlife.
* Supervised production of the digest, a condensed version of the magazine, from conception to printing.

Writer and Editorial Coordinator

* Organized and reported on a 10-day trip to Argentina for a feature on forest conservation, resulting in a 3,000-word story and two infographics. Drafted budget and itinerary and conducted extensive interviews in Spanish during trip.
* Pitched, researched, wrote and edited stories, profiles and infographics for 15 WWF quarterly magazine issues (an average of 6 stories per issue), along with occasional stories for the organization’s news section.
* Collaborated with freelance writers, photographers and illustrators; created an easy-to-use freelancer database for the editorial team.
* Started a monthly lunch-and-learn series on professional development topics for the editorial team.

**United Nations Foundation,** *Washington, DC* *(Jan. – Sept. 2013)*

Communications Consultant

* Ghostwrote a series of essays for high-level public officials, entrepreneurs and activists to promote Why We Care, a public awareness campaign supporting universal access to family planning services.
* Crafted communication strategies, press releases and talking points for senior experts speaking at events.

Public Affairs Intern

* Wrote and edited blog posts, newsletters, press releases, statements from foundation leaders and a weekly team email about communication priorities.

**SmartBrief**, *Washington, DC (Aug. – Dec. 2012)*

Editorial Intern

* Reported and wrote stories for blogs on food and education sectors. Wrote and edited content for newsletters about the nonprofit, business, marketing and energy industries. Did occasional copy editing.

**City Year Greater Philadelphia,** *Philadelphia, PA* *(Aug. 2010 – June 2011)*

Corps Member and Outreach Coordinator

* Started a journalism club for students at a Philadelphia high school; coached students in writing and interviewing techniques and helped them launch a school paper. Secured funding for a paid teacher supervisor for the following year.
* Tutored students and assisted teachers in English, Spanish and art classes.

**EDUCATION**

**University of Pennsylvania,** *Philadelphia, PA (May 2012)*
Master of Arts, English

**University of Virginia,** *Charlottesville, VA (May 2010)*

Bachelor of Arts, English (High Distinction) and Spanish

**RELEVANT SKILLS**

* Analyzing databases and data sets using spreadsheets and Excel and Sheets functions.
* Public records sleuthing, interviewing and narrative writing; research and fact-checking.
* Professional working proficiency in Spanish.
* Shooting with DSLR and iPhone cameras; basic photo and video editing.
* Software Experience: For content management, BLOX and WordPress; for public records sharing, DocumentCloud; for video editing and management, iMovie and Field59; for general workflow, Microsoft 365, Google Drive, Slack and Zoom.