

# **WisconsinWatch: Jessica Arp, assistant news director and reporter for WISC-TV, named 2019 Distinguished Wisconsin Watchdog**

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Jessica Arp, the assistant news director and chief political reporter for WISC-TV and Channel3000.com, has been named the 2019 recipient of the Distinguished Wisconsin Watchdog Award.

The award recognizes an individual's extraordinary contributions to open government or investigative journalism in Wisconsin and is a highlight of the ninth annual Wisconsin Watchdog Awards reception and dinner, set for April 16.

Arp has reported on Wisconsin politics for WISC-TV in Madison since 2007 and has received Edward R. Murrow, Wisconsin Broadcasters Association and Emmy awards for her coverage of Wisconsin elections. In addition to her reporting duties, Arp has been involved in leading efforts in investigative techniques, innovation and social media among the staff to help build the WISC-TV digital brand.

"For more than a decade Jessica Arp has been holding public servants accountable," Tom Bier, former vice president and general manager at WISC-TV, wrote in his nomination letter.

"It's a consistent record of strong investigative stories based in research, data use, strong visuals and easy-to-understand language. Jessica has carved a path and shown that investigative reporting is not only important but can be made relevant to news consumers."

Arp has fact-checked more than 100 claims made by politicians, including in political commercials, in WISC-TV's ongoing [Reality Check](#) series.

Her reporting uncovered problems with the [oversight of limousine companies](#) following a deadly 2016 crash. The report documented flaws in the current system, while exploring potential solutions and informing consumers of steps to take to keep themselves safe.

Arp's most recent investigative work [detailed problems](#) with completing a multi-million dollar computer upgrade of the state online benefits system.

The Distinguished Wisconsin Watchdog Award is presented jointly by the [Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism](#), the [Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council](#), the [Madison Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists](#), the [Wisconsin Newspaper Association](#), [Wisconsin Broadcasters Association](#) and [University of Madison-Wisconsin School of Journalism and Mass Communication](#).

Arp will be honored at the [Wisconsin Watchdog Awards reception and dinner](#), scheduled for April 16 at The Madison Club, [5 E. Wilson St.](#) The reception begins at 5 p.m. and dinner at 6 p.m. The event is presented by the [Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism](#), Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council and the Madison Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

Attendance is limited to 150 and in recent years, all tickets have been sold.

Also at the event, Wisconsin's largest newspaper and a small Madison paper produced mostly by teens will receive honors in the [2019 Openness Awards](#), or Opees, bestowed annually by the [Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council](#).

The awards recognize extraordinary achievement in the arena of open government.

The awards program will be preceded by the fourth annual "Watchdog 101: Essential Skills for Investigative Journalists," a free, fast-paced workshop led by the Center's award-winning staff.

Sponsorship packages and discounts for purchases of tables are available for the event. Contact Lauren Fuhrmann at [lauren@wisconsinwatch.org](mailto:lauren@wisconsinwatch.org) for more information. Proceeds support the Center's investigative reporting and training of journalists, and also make it possible for students to attend the workshop and awards program.

Dave Zweifel, editor emeritus of The Capital Times and a founder of the Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council, was named the inaugural Distinguished Wisconsin Watchdog Award winner in 2011 and serves on the award selection committee. The late Dick Wheeler, founder of the Wheeler Report and an advocate for public access to the workings of state government, was honored in 2012. In 2013, U.S. District Judge Lynn Adelman, the chief author of Wisconsin's Open Records Law and a strong advocate of the Open Meetings Law, received the award.

The 2014 recipient was Milwaukee Journal Sentinel investigative reporter Dave Umhoefer. In 2015, Journal Sentinel investigative health reporter Meg Kissinger received the honor for tirelessly exposing flaws in the mental health system. In 2016, attorney Robert J. Dreps was honored for being a champion of open government and representing news organizations in groundbreaking cases for three decades. The 2017 recipient was Gilman Halsted, a retired Wisconsin Public Radio reporter who produced award-winning examinations of the state's criminal justice system. In 2018, Raquel Rutledge, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter at Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, received the award.