



Star of Texas winner Andrew Davidhazy teaches Making Photographs Through a Slit at the 2026 Winter Conference. Photo by John Skees

## Davidhazy Receives Star of Texas Veteran Educator is 20th Recipient of Award

By *Josette Coker*  
*V.R. Eaton HS*

As photographers, we know that photography has the power to tell stories, evoke strong emotions, and even capture what the world forgets to see. But what about what the human eye can't actually see? This year's Star of Texas recipient has made it his life's work to make the "invisible" visible.

The "Star of Texas" award, ATPI's highest honor, recognizes individuals for their significant contributions to photography education. At the 39th annual Winter Conference held in Austin, Andrew Davidhazy, renowned educator at the Rochester Institute of Technology, joined the Star of Texas club, becoming the 20th member to receive this prestigious honor. He is a photographer who has combined science and art, turning cameras into

tools for scientific discovery.

Davidhazy began his photography career by attending RIT himself, earning AAS, BFA, and MFA degrees, where he specialized in technical and scientific photography. His focus was on using photography as a measurement and analytical tool, not just a means of artistic expression.

As a result, he became a mentor to generations of imaging professionals across his 45-year tenure at RIT, the same place he started. Former students Stan Godwin, 12th Star of Texas recipient, and Denis Defibaugh, both RIT graduates, said, "His approach to the science of photography invited viewers to become involved with new ways of seeing objects, motion, and the unseen captured by Andy's cameras. While students at RIT, we got to see firsthand the genius of this legendary teacher."

He is known for "visualizing the invisible," building a career capturing what the human eye cannot see. His expertise includes high-speed photography, stroboscopy, aerial imaging, and photogrammetry for photo-finish imaging. He has been widely published internationally in books, magazines, and news articles. He was even called upon during the high profile murder trial of OJ Simpson to authenticate key photographs for the prosecution.

Deanne Brown, 15th Star of Texas recipient said, "Andy's energy and enthusiasm for his craft are infectious. He's truly one of the most intellectually curious people I've ever known. To observe him demonstrating how to plan for, set up and execute a strobe photo is nothing short

**See STAR on page 2**

### Upcoming Events

more information can be found on the ATPI web site at [www.atpi.org](http://www.atpi.org)

**8.26.2026**

ATPI Social Media Contest  
Deadline  
#ATPIMissingSummer

**9.30.2026**

ATPI Social Media Contest  
Deadline  
#ATPINewFriends

**10.3-5.2026**

TAJE Fall Fiesta  
San Antonio, Texas

**10.28.2026**

ATPI Social Media Contest  
Deadline  
#ATPISchoolSpirit(s)

*Do you know of some other important dates? If so, e-mail us at [info@atpi.org](mailto:info@atpi.org) and we'll pass them on.*

# Conference Attendees Get Firsthand Look at History

By Corvette Williams  
Denison HS

In the heart of Austin, Texas lies a monumental research center for aspiring photojournalists. Holding some of the most impactful collections of literature, art, photography, film, and the performing arts, the Harry Ransom Center is one of the top humanities research libraries and museums in the country.

“Visitors can expect to see a mix of creativity, history and unique artifacts that hold significant impact in our world,” Denison HS sophomore Keeley McNeil said.

The center sits on the University of Texas campus and is open to students, scholars, and regular visitors, which makes it feel more accessible than you’d expect for a place with millions of rare items. Inside, the collections include rare books, original manuscripts, photographs, artworks, and cultural artifacts that document creative history. Some of the most

famous pieces include the Gutenberg Bible and the Niépce heliograph, which is the earliest known surviving photograph made with a camera.

“I was really impressed with the selection of photos that we were able to see and photograph. I was really interested in the Niépce heliograph. It was really neat to be able to see the first photograph,” Denison High School sophomore Preslee Palmer said.

Seeing everything up close, from millions of photographs to handwritten drafts from major writers makes the whole place feel like a giant archive of humankind.

It serves as a reminder that images aren’t just pictures, they’re part of a much bigger story that gets saved, studied, and passed on. The Harry Ransom Center shows how powerful visual storytelling can be when it’s preserved the right way.

Schools can contact the Ransom Center to set up tours at [hrc.utexas.edu/visit](http://hrc.utexas.edu/visit).



Naomi Giordano (Denison HS) examines photos on display at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin during the 2026 ATPI Winter Conference. Photo by Presley Palmer (Denison HS)

## STAR, continued

of watching a well-choreographed magic show. The results are always one-of-a-kind works of art.”

Davidhazy has not only made strides in photography as a science, but he also was at the forefront of creating communities. He founded and managed forums and listservs, connecting photographers of all levels around the world.

Even after retirement, he has continued to be a lifelong educator beyond the classroom, sharing his knowledge through online groups, articles, and teaching at the winter conference several times since 2014.

His work is a testament to the creative experimentation process, making complex techniques accessible, reinforcing the idea that you can teach powerful concepts with what you already have, like dollar store flashlights for motion studies with basic cameras. Experimenting is not just for the science department.

As educators, we can learn from Davidhazy’s work that curiosity beats perfection— that the process is sometimes more important than the product, and definitely more



ATPI Executive Director Mark Murray presents Andrew Davidhazy the Star of Texas award at the 2026 Winter Conference. Photo by John Skees

fun. Maybe that means grading the PROCESS and not just the final image. Perhaps you can find ways to implement this methodology by including “experimentation days” where the assignment is to shoot the same subject 10 different ways.

Today’s students need engagement, inspiration, and a break from teacher-led discussions. In his career, Davidhazy has found ways to make students eager to try new angles, critically think

through difficult concepts, and find new techniques to use photography as a means of discovery in creating works of art.

So let students surprise you. Turn the classroom into “controlled chaos.” When we let go, we create opportunities for discovery where both students and teachers find more than what they expected.

Check out the previous Star of Texas recipients at [atpi.org/star](http://atpi.org/star).

## 2026 Winter Conference Thanks

- State Representative Donna Howard and her Policy Communications Director Jimmy Counihan
- State Senator Pete Flores and his assistant, Marjorie Kamys
- Robert Davis and Joseph Randel from the State Preservation Board
- Laura DiMeo, Matthew Krebs, Sean Perry and Crystal Vasquez at Austin Community College Highland Campus
- Neal Farris, Paula Dohanian and the Dallas Society for Visual Communications Foundation
- CADY
- Bob Malish and Canon
- Friesens
- Jostens
- Journalism Education Association
- Texas Professional Photographers Association
- Walsworth
- Exhibitors: Precision Camera, Tamron, RIT, Canon, DSVC

# Spring Contest Winners Named

Judging for the 2025-2026 end-of-year contests took place on Saturday, March 2, via Zoom. The four judges were **Laura Burlton**, Houston fine art photographer and educator, **Cody Duty**, San Antonio multimedia specialist, **Neal Farris**, Dallas advertising, fashion and product photographer, and **Ian McVea**, editorial photographer, photojournalist and retired educator.

Burlton said, "All of the schools I saw had some really amazing images. Yes, some had better equipment or location to execute their vision, but what makes an image stand out to me most is the emotion it illicit when viewing and I think all of the portfolios I viewed brought that to the table."

Winning images are available on the ATPI website by selecting the categories under each contest at [atpi.org/contests](http://atpi.org/contests). They will be added to ATPI's SmugMug galleries this summer.



*This architectural photograph by Isla Jervis, Lamar Middle School in Austin, was part of the school's first place Rising Star portfolio.*

## Top Program

St. Mark's School of Texas  
Dallas  
Scott Hunt, instructor

## Top Video Program

Walnut Grove High School  
Prosper  
Leigh Anne Wiemann, instructor

## Rising Star Program

Lamar Middle School  
Austin  
Alissa Godina, instructor

## Hal Fulgham Scholarships

**Fine Art:** Jacob Riemer  
Griffin School | Austin  
Lars Frazer, instructor

**Photojournalism:** Lillie Orgeron  
Texas High School | Texarkana  
Clint Smith instructor

**Video:** Jimena Martinez  
Dickinson High School | Dickinson  
Matthew Koby, instructor

# 2026 Winter Conference Celebrates Photography



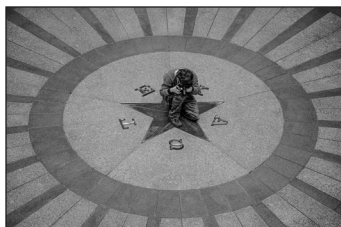
*J.B. Saucedo, Texas Country Reporter host and the Winter Conference keynote speaker, talks to the group on Friday evening at the Capitol. He was sponsored by the Dallas Society of Visual Communications Foundation. Photo by John Skees*



*In Austin Community College Highland campus' Rock the Booth: 90's Grunge & Glamour bands-on class, students Gabby Garza and Ella Owens, Port Neches-Groves High School, channel their inner rockers. Students and teachers were able to have their photo taken with a variety of props, thanks to ACC professor Frank Curry and his students. All images are available to download at [atpi.smugmug.com](http://atpi.smugmug.com).*



*Texas High School student Jamaiyah Ramos receives a high five from a classmate after winning first place in the Advanced Art Portfolio contest for her set of five images. All winning images are posted at [atpi.smugmug.com](http://atpi.smugmug.com). Photo by John Skees*



*This photo from the State Capitol by Todd Peterson, Nocona High School, won Best of Show Faculty in the onsite contests.*



*Students work with external flash in the Lighting on Location class at ACC on Saturday, taught by Wade Kennedy, Richardson High School. Photo by Wade Kennedy*

# Briefs

## 2026-2027 Social Media Contests

Start planning for next school year's social media contest categories:

- Aug. 26 - #ATPIMissingSummer
- Sept.30 - #ATPINewFriends
- Oct. 28 - #ATPISchoolSpirit(s)
- Dec.16 - #ATPIFestiveFun
- Jan. 27 - #ATPIThat'sNew
- March 31 - #ATPIGreenWithEnvy
- May 26 - #ATPITimeToFly

Because we continue to experience issues with Instagram's algorithm preventing judges from seeing all entries, we will use a form to capture submissions. Competitors should still post their entries to a public social media account, then submit the post URL on the Social Media Contests form at [atpi.org/socialmedia](http://atpi.org/socialmedia).

Social media contests are open to K-12 students and teachers. ATPI membership is not required.

Competitors may submit up to five entries per contest.

More information and rules are available on the ATPI website.

## TAJE Fall Fiesta

Save the date for the annual Texas Association of Journalism Educators Fall Fiesta. This year's event returns to the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center Oct. 3-5. Students can participate in pre-convention as well as on-site photo and video contests, which count toward Imagemaker Team points, as well as learn from professionals in journalism and scholastic media. Information about the convention is available at [taje.org](http://taje.org).

## ATPI Committees

If you are looking for ways to get involved with ATPI, consider joining one of the committees. These are a great way to help guide the direction of the organization and help give back to the community. ATPI has committees for the Winter Conference, Summer Workshop, Membership, Contests and Newsletter. If you are interested in learning more about any of these committees or joining, reach out to the committee chairs.

# 2026 Summer Workshop Cancelled

Due to a delay in finding a location for this summer's workshop, the board made the tough decision to cancel the Summer Workshop for Instructors Only for just the second time in 32 years. As we look towards 2027, vice president Laura Spray, VP Workshops, is working with a group of previous summer workshop instructors to rethink the model we have used and see how it can be updated to best serve the membership.

Recognizing that summer vacation times have become more compressed, that professional development budgets have shrunk or gone away completely, and that priorities have changed since the pandemic, the committee is being given the opportunity to rethink the workshop. They will work this summer to develop a couple of options and then share that with members for feedback. The goal is for the board to adopt a plan during our regular business meeting in September and then have plans in place by December 2026 so that it can be advertised to the membership earlier.

If you have ideas or suggestions - both about the model we currently use or classes we should be offering - please share those with Laura at [vpworkshops@atpi.org](mailto:vpworkshops@atpi.org).

# 2027 Winter Conference Plans to Go Big

The 2027 Winter Conference will be the 40th convention for ATPI and the board is already discussing ideas to mark the occasion. During the business meeting at the 2026 Winter Conference in Austin, teachers were asked for ideas on how to celebrate the event. In addition to special pins or t-shirts, the idea was also brought up about offering the exclusive ATPI baseball caps that we present to hands-on instructors each year to everyone.

The convention will take place at the University of Texas at Arlington in late February, but the specific date has not been set. The schedule will probably be the same we have used for the last several conventions, with contests, sessions and the keynote speaker on Friday and hands-on classes and portfolio critiques on Saturday. Registration would include lunches on both Friday and Saturday.

The board is looking for any suggestions from members on things that they would like to see for your students and yourselves. If there are some special hands-on classes that you can think of, share those too. If you have ideas or would be interested in helping plan the conference, please reach out to John Skees, VP Conference, at [vpconference@atpi.org](mailto:vpconference@atpi.org). More details will be available in the November newsletter.

**Association of Texas  
Photography Instructors**  
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# Imagemaker

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Part of Annabelle Davis' First Place Beginning Portfolio from the Winter Conference. Davis is a student at Texas High School.