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# Expressing Themselves

October 2008 Issue

By [Jill Schachner Chanen](#)

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Playboy may be synonymous with a lot of things, just not necessarily the First Amendment.

But the Chicago-based Playboy Foundation has always been an aggressive defender of the First Amendment (long before Larry Flynt), and this year it is kicking the cause up a notch with the introduction of its Freedom of Expression Award.

The award is the newest addition to Playboy's nearly 30-year-old Hugh M. Hefner First Amendment Awards, which honor individuals who have significantly contributed to the protection of First Amendment rights in the United States. But Playboy has only given the awards sporadically since their inception in 1979.

With the introduction of its Freedom of Expression Award, Playboy is vowing to make the honors annual. "We believe it is critically important at this time to make Americans aware of the continuing threats to their rights of freedom of speech and freedom of expression," says Elizabeth Austin, a Playboy spokeswoman.

The Freedom of Expression Award will honor an individual whose accomplishments indicate a promising future as an effective advocate for the First Amendment, according to Austin. The award comes with a \$25,000 check to further the winner's work.

But don't look for the girl with the largest, uhh, portfolio to win. The awards are a serious acknowledgement of work in support of the First Amendment, says University of Chicago law professor Geoffrey R. Stone, himself a former HMH First Amendment Award winner for his book *Perilous Times*.

"They help to call attention to the nominees and winners in a way that makes the work more generally visible," says Stone, who also will help judge this year. "Awards like this acknowledge, reaffirm and celebrate the accomplishments of these people."

Stone and his fellow judges—American Civil Liberties Union President Nadine Strossen and David Rubin, former dean of Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications—will have their hands full. Austin says Playboy received a record 60 nominees this year.

Nominees include Michael Koretzky, adviser to the student newspaper at Florida Atlantic University. Koretzky founded the First Amendment Free Food Festival, where students can get a free lunch by signing away their First Amendment rights. There's also Steven Markoff, whose website, ProCon, promotes education, critical thought and informed citizenship by presenting controversial issues in a simple pro-con format; and University of Oregon law professor Merle Weiner, whose defense against a defamation suit led to scholarly writings on teachers and the First Amendment.

The winners will be announced in an award ceremony this month.

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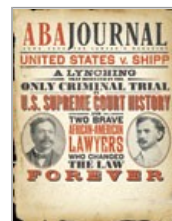
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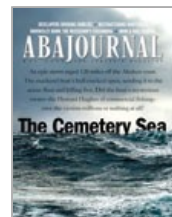
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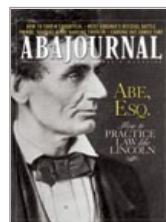


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