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***Seattle Times* Reporter to Receive Mental Health Reporting Award**

The Washington State Coalition to Improve Mental Health Reporting has chosen *Seattle Times* reporter Maureen O'Hagan to receive the Washington State 2010-2011 Mental Health Reporting Award. The award will be presented at the [2011 Washington Behavioral Health Care Conference](#) on Friday, June 10.

O'Hagan's feature article, "[Eleanor Owen's tireless battle for mental-health care](#)" appeared in Pacific Northwest magazine on Sunday, March 13, 2011. The in-depth profile traces a local legend's personal journey from determined parent to passionate advocate and reveals several insights about recovery from schizophrenia and the genesis of a social movement.

"Maureen O'Hagan's profile of Eleanor Owens directs attention to the importance of engaging passionately with the mental health system in the broadest sense, from state agencies to pharmaceutical companies, while staying focused, as a good story does, on the dynamic woman at its center," says University of Washington Prof. Roger Simpson, who teaches journalism ethics and reporting and served as one of three judges for the contest

Also judging were: Ann Christian, C.E.O. of the Washington Community Mental Health Council, and Cindy Adams, Customer Services Coordinator with Greater Columbia Behavioral Health in Kennewick, who represented people with psychiatric disabilities. The top three entries were then voted on by 200 members of the Washington State Coalition to Improve Mental Health Reporting for an online vote to determine the winner.

When informed of the award, an appreciative O'Hagan replied, "the story meant a lot to me and my editors, and it's so nice to be recognized. It was a great learning experience too."

She explains, "We set out to write a profile of Eleanor because she has a long and interesting history with the mental health system--and because she's such a personality, to boot. But it was her son Jody who quietly provided what we considered to be some of the most valuable insights. Through this very personal story, we were able to write about larger issues that have touched so many lives. We're truly honored to have this work recognized."

O'Hagan has been a *Seattle Times* reporter since 2002. Before joining the magazine staff, she covered such beats as social issues, courts and food issues.

Her article was chosen from nearly 30 print and online stories produced by news organizations across Washington State. The honor includes a \$500 cash award. The goal of the annual contest is to reward journalism that improves the public's understanding of mental illnesses and reflects accurate, in-depth and even-handed reporting.

Runners-up for this year's reporting prize were Rick Steigmeyer's set of [three articles on PTSD](#) in the Nov. 11, 2010 edition of the *Wenatchee World* and Julie Krug's "[Advocates seek to shine light on schizophrenia](#)" in the Oct. 5, 2010, *Spokane Spokesman-Review*.

The Washington State Coalition to Improve Mental Health Reporting seeks to support journalists' efforts to report fairly and accurately on mental illness by providing reporting guidelines, sources and factual information.

For more information about the coalition and links to all three award finalists, go to www.mentalhealthreporting.org.



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