

The Power of the Media and Its Impact on Mental Health Recovery

March 26, 2010



Archive

This Training Teleconference will be recorded. The PowerPoint presentation, PDF version, the audio recording of the teleconference, and a written transcript will be posted to the SAMHSA ADS Center Web site at <http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/teleconferences/archive/default.aspx>.



Disclaimer

The views expressed in this training event do not necessarily represent the views, policies, and positions of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).



Questions

At the end of the speaker presentations, you will be able to ask questions. You may submit your question by pressing “*1” on your telephone keypad. You will enter a queue and be allowed to ask your question in the order in which it is received. On hearing the conference operator announce your first name, you may proceed with your question.



Otto Wahl, Ph.D.
University of Hartford

MEDIA DEPICTION OF MENTAL ILLNESSES



Why are We Concerned?

- Mass media are those sources that reach vast audiences on a daily basis and include television, film, radio, newspapers, advertising, and the Internet:
 - the average American watches 4 hours of TV each day
 - 1.36 billion movie tickets were sold in 2008
 - 1.71 million DVDs were rented and over one billion sold in 2007
 - the average Internet user spends 61 hours/month on the Internet (February 2009)

Bryant, J. & Thompson, S. (2002). *Fundamentals of Media Effects*. McGraw-Hill.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorelli, N. (1980). The "Mainstreaming" of America. *Journal of Communication*, (30), 10-29.





SAMHSA's Resource Center to Promote
Accentance, Dignity and Social Inclusion
Associated with Mental Health

Why are We Concerned?

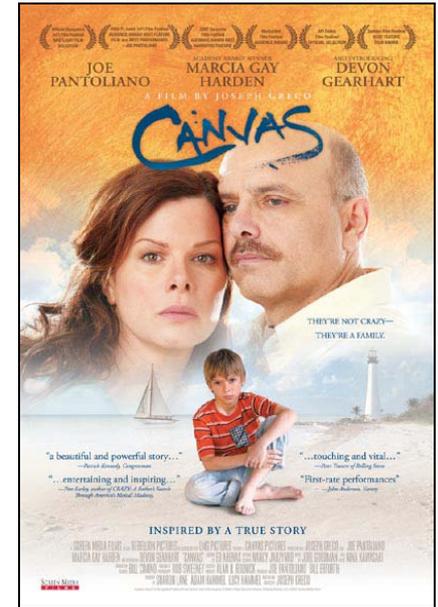
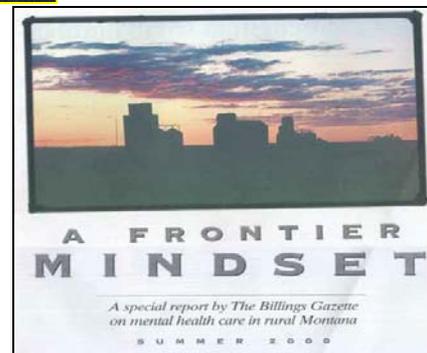
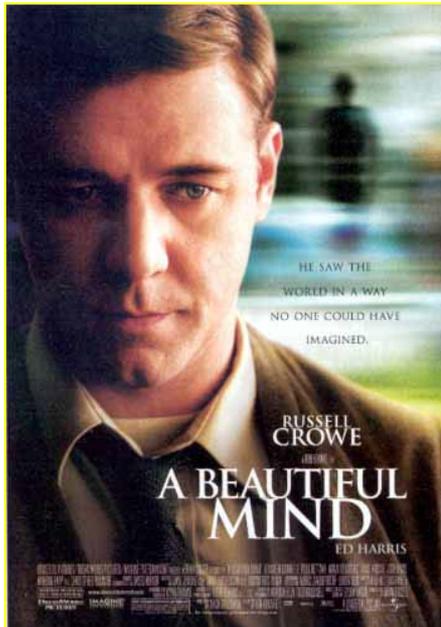
- Research has shown that media presentations influence the way viewers and readers think about their world
- People often respond to mental health labels based on the ideas and images they have, not based on the behaviors they encounter
- Members of the public report that the most common source of their information about mental illnesses is mass media, so the ideas and images people have about mental illnesses are often those that come from mass media



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There is Much Positive Depiction!

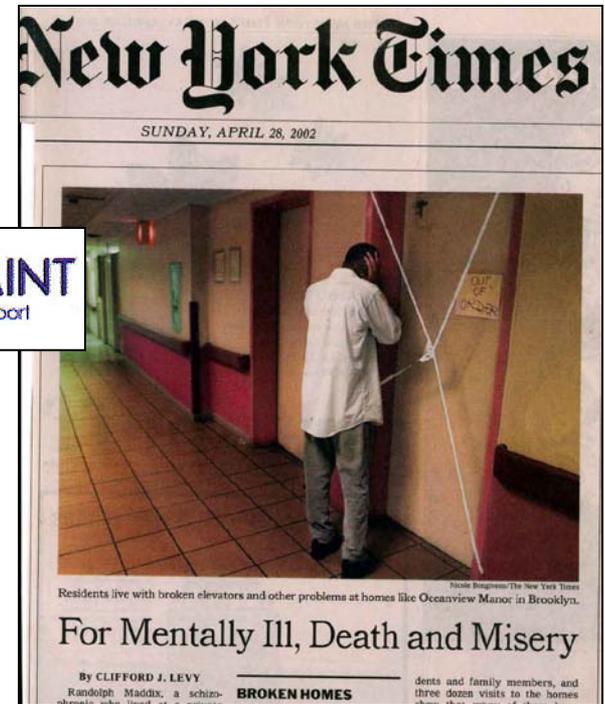


Investigative Reporters Expose Abuse & Neglect of People with Psychiatric Disorders



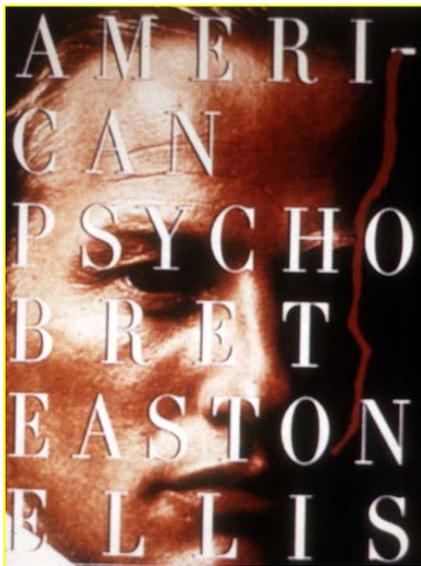
**Ashes of patients who died
at Oregon State Hospital**

DEADLY RESTRAINT
A Hartford Courant Investigative Report



Mass Media Tend to Inaccurately Show People with Mental Illness as Violent & Dangerous

In Books



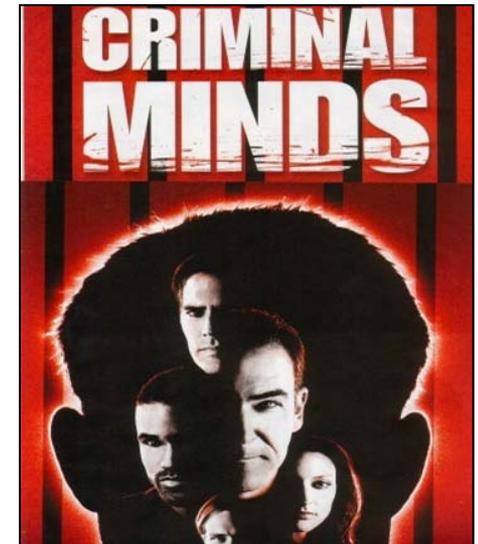
In Films



In Selective News Coverage



In TV Programs



Mass Media Tend to Inaccurately Show People with Mental Illness as Violent & Dangerous

- "Dangerousness is the most common theme of newspaper stories related to mental illnesses." (1)
- One study of prime time television programming found that people depicted with mental illnesses were 10 times more likely to be shown as a violent criminal than non-mentally disordered television characters. (2)

- (1) Wahl, O., Wood, A., & Richards, R. (2002). Newspaper coverage of mental illness: Is it changing? *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, Vol. 6, 9-31.
- (2) Don Diefenbach (2007). *Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 35, 181-195.





The Reality

- The vast majority of people with psychiatric disorders are not dangerous and violent.(1)
- The vast majority of violent crimes are committed by people without mental illnesses.(2)
- People with mental illnesses are more likely to be victims of violence. (3)

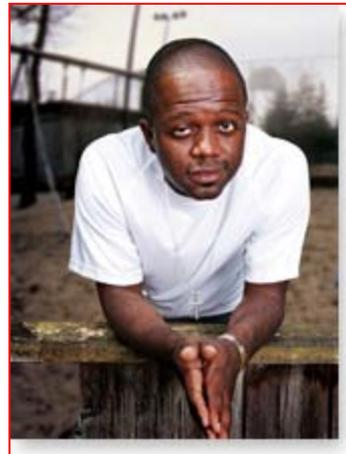
(1, 2) Monahan, et al. (2002). Rethinking risk assessment: The MacArthur study of mental disorders and violence.

(1) Elbogaen (2009). The intricate link between violence and mental disorder. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol. 66, 152-161.

(3) Teplin, L.A., McClelland, G.M., Abram, K.M. & Weiner, D.A. (2005). Crime victimization in adults with severe mental illness. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, Vol. 62, 911-921.



**Most people with
mental illnesses are
caring, law-abiding
citizens who are our
friends and relatives
and neighbors and
co-workers**





SAMHSA's Resource Center to Promote
A c c e p t a n c e , D i g n i t y a n d S o c i a l I n c l u s i o n S o c i a l I n c l u s i o n A s s o c i a t e d w i t h M e n t a l H e a l t h

Mass Media Tend to Show People with Mental Illness as Unlikely to Recover



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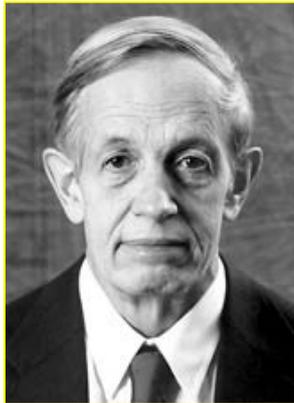
<http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/>



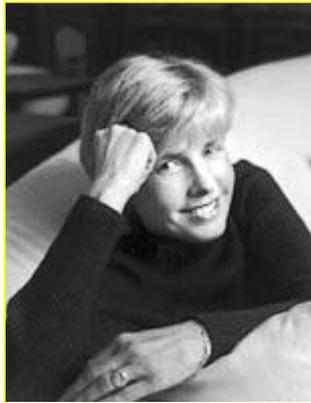
**SAMHSA's Resource Center to Promote
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The Reality

John Nash



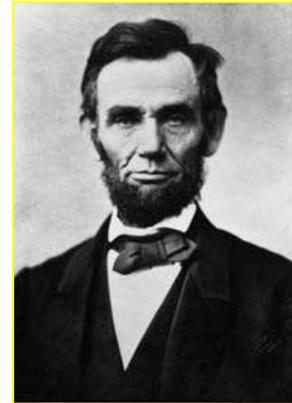
Kay Jamison



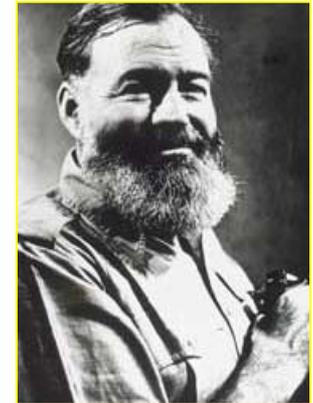
Buzz Aldrin



**Abraham
Lincoln**



**Ernest
Hemingway**



**People with mental illnesses do recover and make
valuable contributions to our communities**

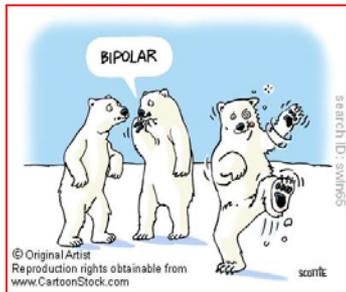


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Mass Media Often Ridicule & Trivialize Mental Illnesses

Through Jokes and Cartoons



In TV Programs



In Advertisements



WE'RE CRAZY!
FOUR LUNATIC DAYS OF INSANE SELLING!
Clip-n-save crazy coupons below

<p>\$1.00 DOWN LAYAWAY or NO INTEREST - NO PAYMENTS FOR 90 DAYS</p>	<p>WATERBEDS Proud from \$98.00</p>	<p>COUPON Receive a discount on anything you buy</p>
<p>HOUSE FULL OF FURNITURE \$668 17 PIECES OF FURNITURE!</p>	<p>WATERBED SUPPLIES MATTRESSES \$38 MATTRESS PADS \$9.95 HEATERS \$58.00 PADDED RAILS \$19.00</p>	<p>COUPON Buy a sofa and chair \$499.95 and get loveseat or recliner FREE</p>

And Film Comedies



The Reality

- Mental illnesses are serious and painful conditions
- People who live with these illnesses may be hurt, offended, and demoralized when mental illness is treated as a source of humor
- Use of respectful language is important for maintaining dignity and acceptance for people living with psychiatric disorders

Stigma: Language Matters

"You finally decide to get help, and then you're punished for it—pigeonholed into a diagnosis, shamed, labeled, and discriminated against for life. The stigma can be worse than the illness."

Stigma is about disrespect: It hurts, punishes, and diminishes people.
It harms and undermines all relationships.
It appears in behavior, language, attitude, and tone of voice.
It happens even when we don't mean it.

Disrespectful Language	Respectful Language
<p>Crazy, lunatic, deficient, wacko, loony tune, psycho, etc.</p> <p>Manic-Depressive (when referring to a person)</p> <p>Schizophrenic</p> <p>Handicapped person</p> <p>Slow, low-functioning</p> <p>Normal</p>	<p>Mental illness or psychiatric disability</p> <p>Person with bipolar disorder or manic-depressive illness</p> <p>Person who has schizophrenia</p> <p>Person with a disability</p> <p>Person who has cognitive difficulties</p> <p>Nondisabled person</p>

Some Rules of Thumb...

- DON'T** focus on a **disability**. Focus instead on issues that affect the quality of life for everyone, e.g. accessible transportation, housing, affordable health care, etc.
- DON'T** portray **successful persons with disabilities as superhumans**. This carries expectations for others and is patronizing to those who make various achievements.
- DON'T** **sensationalize a disability**. This means not using terms such as "afflicted with," "suffers from," "victim of," and so on.
- DON'T** use **generic labels** such as "the retarded," "our mentally ill," etc.
- DON'T** use **psychiatric diagnoses as metaphors for other situations**. e.g. a "schizophrenic situation." This is not only stigmatizing, but inaccurate.
- DO** **put people first, not their disabilities**. Say, for example, "person with schizophrenia" rather than "schizophrenic."
- DO** **emphasize abilities, not limitations**. Terms that are condescending must be avoided.

For more information, contact Jennifer Brown, Project Director, The Anti-Stigma Project,
1521 S. Edgewood St., Suite C, Baltimore, MD 21227, Phone: 410-646-0262/800-704-0262; Fax: 410-646-0264

Sponsored by the Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration *1998





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Media Depictions can have Damaging Consequences

- They may reinforce and perpetuate negative public attitudes
- Recent research has found that:
 - 48.6 percent of the public are unwilling to work closely on a job with someone with depression
 - The percentage of people associating mental illness with violence has doubled since 1956

Link, B.G., Phelan, J.C., Bresnahan, M., Stueve, A. & Pescosolido, B.A. (1999). Public conceptions of mental illness. *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 89, 1328-1333.



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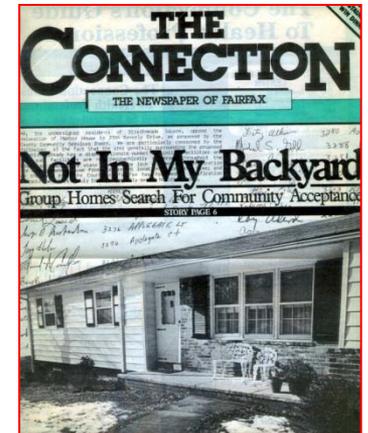
In a Survey of People Living with Mental Illnesses...

**60 percent said they had
been shunned and avoided**



**31 percent said they had
been turned down for a
job for which they were
qualified.**

**20 percent indicated that
they had difficulty finding
housing**



77 percent said they had been hurt or offended by media depictions

Source: Wahl, O. (1999). *Telling is Risky Business*. Rutgers University Press.



For Additional Information

- Wahl, O.F. (1995): *Media Madness: Public Images of Mental Illness*. NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Morris, G. (2006): *Mental health issues and the media*. NY: Routledge.
- The Stigma of Cinemania (a consumer-created Web site of information and examples).
<http://www.mentalhealthstigma.com/cinemania.html>



Bob Carolla, J.D.
Director of Media Relations
National Alliance on Mental Illness

CHANGING THE BALANCE OF POWER: MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY



Stigma is Imposed by Others

Deriving from a condition which the target of the stigma either did not cause or over which he has little control.” —Gerhard Falck, sociologist, historian

- An attribute, behavior, or reputation which is socially discrediting in a particular way; causes an individual to be classified by others in an undesirable, rejected stereotype rather than in an accepted, normal one
- Types of media sources:
 - news
 - entertainment (television and movies)
 - advertising
 - retail products
 - Web media



U.S Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health (1999), Chapter One

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/home.html>

- “Stigmatization of people with mental disorders has persisted throughout history. Bias, distrust, stereotyping, fear, embarrassment, anger, and/or avoidance manifest it. Stigma leads others to avoid living, socializing or working with, renting to, or employing people with mental disorders...”
- It reduces patients' access to resources and opportunities (e.g., housing, jobs) and leads to low self-esteem, isolation, and hopelessness. It deters the public from seeking and wanting to pay for, care.



U.S Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health (1999), Chapter One

- In its most overt and egregious form, stigma results in outright discrimination and abuse. More tragically, it deprives people of their dignity and interferes with their full participation in society...”





Strategies

Each one reinforces the others

- Praise:
 - Voice Awards
- Protest:
 - NAMI StigmaBusters,
<http://www.nami.org/stigma>
 - Ethical and legal
 - Teaching moments
- Personal contact:
 - Outreach and education
 - Image (competes with television and movies)
- Partnership
 - Collaboration
 - Entertainment Industries Council





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“Red Flags”

A balancing test that influences strategic choices

- Context
- Inaccuracy
- Stereotypes
- Portrayed only as antagonists or villains
- Linkage to violence
- Language (“wacko”; “looneybin”)
- Devaluation (trivialization)
- Butt of jokes
- Offensive or insensitive symbols (e.g., straitjackets)



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Personal Impact

How does it feel? To be on your own. With no direction home. Like a complete unknown.” —Bob Dylan, Like a Rolling Stone

Watching television...sitting in a movie theater...reading a news story

- Isolation
- Rejected
- Mocked
- Marginalized
- Withdrawal
- Integration into self-identity
- Anger

Stigma slows, endangers, or blocks recovery



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From Personal Experience

- Television show-violence-e-mail-suicide (2002)
- *Newsweek* story (1998)
 - President Clinton
 - Arkansas
 - “Hillbillies and manic-depressives”



Personal Experience: Speaking Up—My Response to *Newsweek*

- Letter to publisher (not a letter to editor)
- Copied to editor
- On letterhead
- One-page only
- Polite
- Personal disclosure:
 - I received personal phone calls from both the publisher and editor
 - Pride
 - Empowerment
 - Acceptance of condition
 - Integration into identity



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Protest

- Numbers count:
 - Letters, phone calls, e-mail campaigns, contacting advertisers may lead to education, but does not necessarily change attitudes
- Sensitize
- Embarrass; pressure from others
- Change behavior—“they’ll think twice the next time”
- Teaching moments: “60%-40% rule”
- Pick battles carefully:
 - Weigh priorities
 - Most outrageous cases
 - Choose: private vs. public strategy
 - Don’t make things worse by publicizing something that is mostly being ignored





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Breakthroughs

- Surgeon General's Report (1999)
- *A Beautiful Mind* (2001)
- *ER* – the Sally Fields episodes (2005)
- *The Soloist* (2009)
- *But nothing is perfect—diverse opinion in mental health community*
 - *A Beautiful Mind vs. The Soloist*
 - *Law & Order, Monk, and The United States of Tara*
 - Is mental illness ever funny? Consumers vs. family members



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The Voice Awards

- Praise
- Personal contact
- Promotes partnership
- Builds community consensus



***Nomination deadline for Entertainment Awards:
April 30, 2010***

<http://whatadifference.samhsa.gov/voiceawards>



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Jennifer Stuber, Ph.D.

**Washington State Coalition to Improve
Mental Health Reporting**

ONE STATE'S STORY



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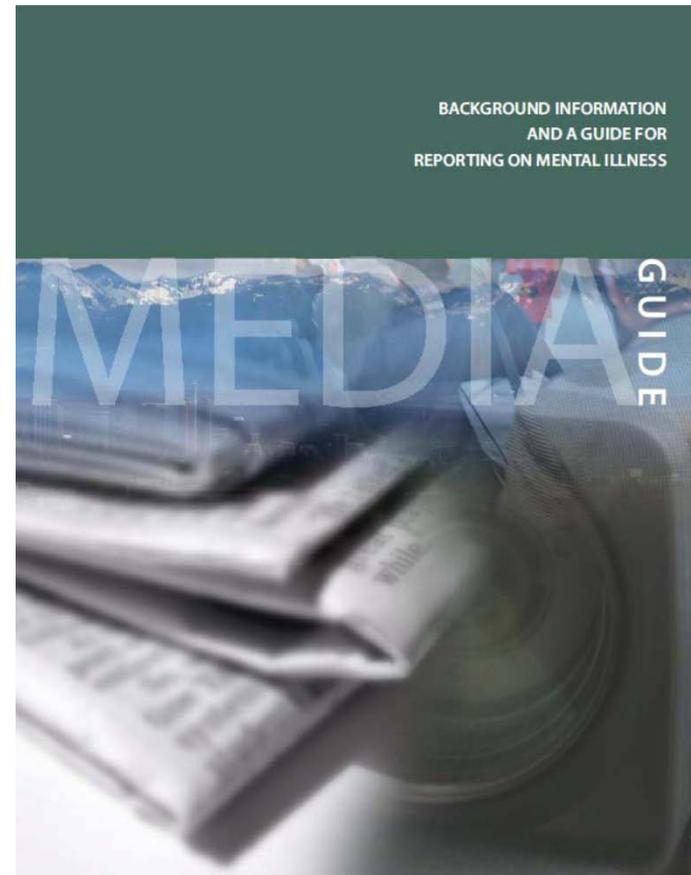
<http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/>

Tragedies Highlight Importance of Media Engagement

- News media are receptive to improving reporting
- News organizations want their publications to be fair and balanced
- Journalists want to report the news accurately and tell interesting stories
- Local news organizations want their publications to improve their communities



Step 1: Completed Reporting Guidelines





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Step 2: Trained Coalition Members in Major Media Markets



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Step 3: Met with Journalists and Editors in News Rooms

The Seattle Times



THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Everett, Washington
HeraldNet

THE WENATCHEE WORLD

 **The Columbian**



Step 4: Develop an Evaluation Strategy

- Track opinion pieces written by coalition members and news stories written by targeted journalists
- Assess changes in news coverage overtime
- Assess changes in community attitudes





Step 5: Respond to News and Pitch Recovery Stories



<http://www.mentalhealthreporting.org>



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Protest Stigmatizing Media Portrayals

The Seattle Times | Editorials / Opinion 

Home Local Nation/World Business/Tech Sports Entertainment Living Travel Opinion Shopping

Quick links: Traffic | Movies | Restaurants | Today's events | Video | Photos | Blogs | Forums | Newspaper delivery

Originally published Thursday, September 24, 2009 at 2:18 PM

 Comments (26)  E-mail article  Print view  Share

Guest columnist

Reaction to escape of state-committed patient stigmatizes people with mental illness

News coverage and public officials' overreaction to the escape of a patient committed to Eastern State Hospital after being found guilty in a 1987 slaying help to stigmatize people with mental illness, writes Jennifer Stuber. A better perspective is needed.

By Jennifer Stuber
Special to The Times

IT was a sad day at the Spokane Interstate County Fair last Thursday. If you were reading The Seattle Times, you would think it was because Phillip A. Paul escaped from an outing organized by Eastern State Hospital, where he is committed as a forensic (legal) patient. However, what makes this story sad to me was the misinformed and sensational reaction of some news stories and even by local and state officials.

Write editorials, letters to the editor, and on-line story comments





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'Acting Out' towards Healing

By CHRISTINE CLARRIDGE
Former Seattle P-I REPORTER



Innovative treatment provides a recovery story angle



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Events are a Good Way to Pitch Recovery Stories

They claim the color of shame

Group's green Bloomsday attire brings attention to mental illness

Rebecca Nappi

Staff writer

SHARE EMAIL PRINT

Tags: Alex S Bloomsday mental illness Youth 'N Action



Ryan Oelrich, Sybrina Cardinale and Alex Stewart, of Youth 'N Action, will wear green for Bloomsday.

Alex Stewart, 14, will be doing Bloomsday today with his face painted green. He'll hand out green "Empower" wrist bands and spread this message: Kids with mental health issues never need to walk alone – in Bloomsday or through life.

Stewart, who has epilepsy and an accompanying mood disorder, will be joined by other young people in his Youth 'N Action group. "This group helps me realize I'm not the only person in the world with epilepsy," he said.

This Story of Mental Illness—and Recovery— is Still Being Told

By CAROL SMITH
Former Seattle P-I REPORTER



Identify people in recovery who are willing to be interviewed



Step 6: Thank Journalists when they Get it Right



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

News *Release*
www.dshs.wa.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Jennifer Stuber, Ph.D., University of Washington School of Social Work, 206-616-3874
Ron Jemelka, Ph.D., Director, Mental Health Transformation Project, 360-902-7501
Rena Shawver, Communications, Mental Health Transformation Project, 360-878-1939

**Washington State taking entries for first annual
“Mental Health Reporting Journalism Award”**

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Coalition to Improve Mental Health Reporting is now accepting entries for a contest to identify the best news stories written or broadcast about mental health issues.

The contest is seeking journalism that seeks to improve the public’s understanding of mental illnesses. Stories also should reflect even-handed and unsensationalized reporting about mental illnesses.



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Additional Resources

Rosalynn Carter Fellowships for Mental Health Journalism

http://www.cartercenter.org/health/mental_health/fellowships/index.html

Applications are due April 19, 2010

“Informed journalists can have a significant impact on public understanding of mental health issues as they shape debate and trends with the words and pictures they convey. They influence their peers and stimulate discussion among the general public, and an informed public can reduce stigma and discrimination.”

—Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter



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Additional Resources

- ADS Center name change
http://www.stopstigma.samhsa.gov/update/archive/april2008_namechange.aspx
- *Challenging Stereotypes: An Action Guide*
<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/SMA01-3513/Default.asp>
- NAMI Stigmabusters <http://www.nami.org/stigma>
- National Stigma Clearinghouse <http://www.stigmanet.org/>
- Understanding Mental Illness: Factsheet on Violence and Mental Illness
http://www.samhsa.gov/MentalHealth/understanding_Mentalllness_Factsheet.aspx
- U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health (1999),
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/home.html>
- Voice Awards <http://www.whatadifference.samhsa.gov/voiceawards/>



Additional Resources

- Radio shows produced by people with the lived experience of mental health recovery:
 - <http://www.desolasol-inc.com> - public health updates from a disability perspective
 - <http://www.madnessradio.net> - personal experiences beyond conventional perspectives
 - <http://www.mindfreedom.org/radio> - alternatives in mental health.



For More Information, Contact

- Otto Wahl, owahl@hartford.edu
- Bob Carolla, BobC@nami.org
- Jennifer Stuber, jstuber@u.washington.edu



Questions

You may now submit your question by pressing “*1” on your telephone keypad. You will enter a queue and be allowed to ask your question in the order in which it is received. On hearing the conference operator announce your first name, you may proceed with your question.



Presenters' Bios

- **Bob Carolla, J.D.**, serves as the director of media relations for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and supervises NAMI's StigmaBusters program. He has worked closely with SAMHSA's Campaign for Mental Health Recovery, including the Voice Awards and ADS Center, and is a member of the editorial board of *bp Magazine*. For 10 years, he served as a senior legislative assistant to former U.S. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME), handling a range of issues including the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- **Jennifer Stuber, Ph.D.**, is on faculty at the University of Washington's School of Social Work. She was the lead editor of a special issue of *Social Science & Medicine* on stigma, prejudice, discrimination, and health. She currently leads a project in Washington state designed to increase community engagement with news media and to improve the accuracy and language of news stories on mental health/mental illness.
- **Otto Wahl, Ph.D.**, is a professor in the Department of Psychology and the Graduate Institute of Professional Psychology, University of Hartford. Dr. Wahl's work includes numerous research articles and he is the author of *Media Madness: Public Images of Mental Illness* (about the media portrayal of mental illness) and *Telling Is Risky Business: Mental Health Consumers Confront Stigma* (documenting the experiences of people with mental illnesses).

Survey

We value your suggestions. Within 24 hours of this teleconference, you will receive an e-mail request to participate in a short, anonymous online survey about today's training material which will take 5 minutes to complete. Survey results will be used to determine resources and topic areas to be addressed in future training events.

Survey participation requests will be sent to all registered event participants who provided e-mail addresses at the time of their registration. Each request message will contain a Web link to our survey tool. Please call **1-800-540-0320** if you have any difficulties filling out the survey online. Thank you for your feedback and cooperation.

Written comments may be sent to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) ADS Center via e-mail at [http://promoteacceptance@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:promoteacceptance@samhsa.hhs.gov).



Archive

This Training Teleconference was recorded. The PowerPoint presentation, PDF version, the audio recording of the teleconference, and a written transcript will be posted to the SAMHSA ADS Center Web site at:

<http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/teleconferences/archive/default.aspx>.





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*The moderator for this call was **Jane Tobler**.*



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