

2009 C. B. Blethen Memorial Awards Winners

Distinguished Diversity Reporting

Circulation under 50,000

First place

Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, Walla Walla, WA for Being different, staying safe

By Sheila Hagar

Judging Comments:

The reporter, Sheila Hagar told the story about a difficult but explosive situation in the schools and creatively explained the problems faced by those with different views. Weaving into the story, the reporter wrote about the role of parents in both the healing and the protection of the teens. After reading the stories, one came away with hope and understanding. Good Job!

Second place

Yakima Herald-Republic, for Series of Stories Divirsitey

By Melissa Sanchez, Ross Courtney, and Phil Ferolito

Judging Comments:

This series of articles was a very interesting detail look at the diverse groups within the community. These stories were well written and told the stories which made the reader have a more thorough understanding of both the Native and the Latino communities. The reporters did a good job relating past, present and future aspects and wove them into wonderful presentations that made you understand the complexity of the history. Great photos and a compelling series!

Circulation over 50,000

First place

The Seattle Times, Seattle, WA for Series of stories on diversity

By The Seattle Times Staff

Judging Comments:

What a complex and diverse group of stories! What the reader gets is a unique understanding and enlightenment that will change how they view the world. They will watch a baseball game with a much different perspective; understand the changing multi-racial ways in which people see themselves and live through another's eyes the problems with deportation and the struggles to rebuild a life. The Seattle Times hit a home run with this group of stories and give the readers an insight that they could not have gotten anywhere else. Great work!

Second place

The Oregonian, Portland, WA for Clashing cultures, fractured families

By Gosia Wosniacka

Judging Comments:

What a great asset Gosia Wosniacka is to the Oregonian. She takes on a very difficult topic, immigration, and when the reader is done, there is an understanding and a connection that the reader feels about the experiences and battles faced. Gosia gives a fresh look at the problems and offers the reader fresh insight to resolve the issues and make a difference. Added stories from Gosia demonstrate a true passion and intensity to her writing. Kudos to The Oregonian for bringing these stories to the community's attention.

Distinguished Deadline Reporting

Circulation under 50,000

First place

The Olympian, Olympia, WA for Olympia man wins lawsuit over "communist" label

By Jeremy Pawloski

Judging Comments:

Mr. Pawloski gave a full report of the lawsuit, backing up the importance of how detrimental the accusation of the Community label is on a Vietnamese-American. He covers both sides of the trial evenly, writes with clarity, and seeks out sources that underline and thoroughly explain the issue."

Second place

The Daily Herald, Everett, WA for Swamped and weary

By The Daily Herald Staff

Judging Comments:

A thorough yet elegant treatment of a fast-evolving story. Many dimensions were woven together in a well-written narrative, and the vignette device brought even more color and humanity to the story. Great work.

Circulation over 50,000

First place

The Oregonian, Portland, WA for [9 presumed dead in firefighter air crash](#)

By The Oregonian Staff

Judging Comments:

The Oregonian's coverage of a firefighting calamity was incisive and aggressive. The story of the accident, its victims and survivors was told vividly, despite the challenges of covering an event in one of the West's most isolated regions. The Oregonian's coverage transcended breaking news, providing exceptional public service reporting. Fairly but quite pointedly, The Oregonian questioned whether this fire even needed to be fought in the first place and pointed out that increasing numbers of raw, young recruits are being placed in harm's way on the firelines. Oregonian reporters, quite early-on, focused on a possible source of the crash, based on previous incidents involving the type of helicopter used in the operation. This was taut, deftly directed coverage, told with humanity and a drive to get to the truth.

Second place

The Seattle Times, Seattle, WA for [January flood series](#)

By The Seattle Times Staff

Judging Comments:

As floodwaters rose in western Washington, the Seattle Times marshaled extraordinary resources to tell the story of this disaster. Sourcing was excellent, with diverse real people telling their stories of struggle and survival. The Times mixed eloquent writing with hard-hitting reporting, highlighting the stakes of I-5 being closed and probing whether the Army Corps of Engineers may have worsened the flooding through dam releases. Another excellent bit of enterprise: Reviewing how some communities had planned and prepared for the floods - and others had not. Overall, a journalistic tour de force.

Distinguished Enterprise Reporting

Circulation under 50,000

First place

Herald and News, Klamath Falls, OR for [To merge, or not to merge and Changing schools](#)

By Ty Beaver, Jill Aho, and Ryan Pfeil

Judging Comments:

Congratulations on a great series. You took an issue of great importance to your readers and explained the heck out of it. I also like the way you used your Web site to supplement your reporting. The roundtable was an interesting way to approach your information gathering.

Second place

Herald and News, Klamath Falls, OR for [Letters from war](#)

By Ryan Pfeil

Judging Comments:

This is a timely series, using letters dating back to the 1st World War, the "war to end all wars." The letters continuing up the very present summer of 2009 gives a dynamic historical perspective on the never ending horrors of wars. And it is sensitive to its local audience, a city with 35 per cent of its population being ex-military.

Circulation over 50,000

First place

The Oregonian, Portland, WA for [China-Oregon trade partners series](#)

By Amy Hsuan

Judging Comments:

Reports from other countries are generally just that: stories about what's going on elsewhere. Hsuan did better than that in Oregon and China: distant neighbors, common interests. She wrote about economic changes in China and what that means for the people there through vignettes that give a sense of the energy, change and challenge. In addition, she brings it home by weaving in how people and companies from Oregon are finding opportunities and threats in the new China. Her writing includes wonderful details that make her writing intimate even when she's describing a factory producing solar cells.

Second place

The Seattle Times, Seattle, WA for [How we're still failing our sound](#)

By Warren Cornwall, Craig Welch, Lynda V. Mapes, and Justin Mayo

Judging Comments:

How we're still failing our Sound is an in-depth look at what goes into deterioration of Puget Sound. It's a clear and complete report that, besides reporting the problems, also lays out steps that could be taken to turn things around.

Distinguished Feature Writing

Circulation under 50,000

First place

The Daily Herald, Everett, WA for [A truth beyond](#)

By Scott North

Judging Comments:

This was an extremely thorough, well researched series that touched on impacts felt by individuals, a community, and law enforcement after the death of a native son. The writer did an excellent job researching the myriad of ways a community can be affected when it loses a life not yet fully lived. I was impressed by the way the writer wove the different aspects of the story into one that ultimately left everyone with renewed understanding and hope. Hope that everyone comes away feeling that the life lost will present those left with a better understanding that may lead to procedures that might save lives in the future.

Second place

Idaho Falls Post Register, Idaho Falls, ID for [Cancer slows Leadore coach's body, but not spirit](#)

By Zach Kyle

Judging Comments:

This was a very touching, well-written story. I was impressed with the writer's ability to interweave and connect several stories into one cohesive piece. I also liked the messages conveyed; the coach using the experience to change his life, the kids perseverance and the support and coming together of an entire community. A nearly perfect piece, well done!

Circulation over 50,000

First place

The Seattle Times, Seattle, WA for [A lifetime of care](#)

By Maureen O'Hagan

Judging Comments:

This series is a superb package of writing and reporting. The writing is clear and engaging, drawing the reader into the lives of the subjects and making the reader care about them. In a field of often brilliant entries, what set this package apart was the seamless way it integrated the broad landscape of society's challenges in caring for the aging disabled into the specific stories of two families confronting those challenges. These stories are full of life, of pathos. In them, outstanding journalism meets compelling storytelling.

Second place

The Oregonian, Portland, WA for [Love and rage shape a life](#)

By Tom Hallman Jr.

Judging Comments:

What a series. The writer pulled together the complex stories of several people whose lives tragically intertwined over several decades. He wove those stories into a compelling series running over five days. That's ambitious, and it worked. Each story skillfully pulled the reader along to the next. The story was told in an unstintingly honest and clear-eyed manner, creating a realistic and thoroughly believable recounting of the events. The writer's use of detail and nuance was outstanding, making events of the murky past come alive.

Distinguished Investigative Reporting

Circulation under 50,000

First place

Yakima Herald-Republic, Yakima, WA for [Hidden wells, dirty water](#)

By Leah Beth Ward

Judging Comments:

"Leah Beth Ward does a phenomenal job of reporting and writing. Her reporting not only brought a significant problem to light, but also caused public health agencies to take steps to start fixing it. The story was thoroughly reported with helpful Web extras showing readers how they could investigate water problems themselves and take action. Kudos to Ward for tackling such an important issue, but also to the newspaper for devoting the resources to make it happen. This didn't look like an easy project."

Second place

The Daily Herald, Everett, WA for [Behavior issues](#)

By Eric Stevick and Scott North

Judging Comments:

"The writing is outstanding. The narrative was compelling and easy to follow, with true character development that is rare in news reporting. I didn't know the players, but I did by the end of the story. As for the investigative aspects, one thing I found impressive was that nobody wanted to talk at first, but once the reporting turned up some answers, it seems the principal players all were resigned to talk about the controversy, painful as that was for all of them."

Circulation over 50,000

First place

The Seattle Times, Seattle, WA for MRSA: Culture of resistance

By Michael J. Berens and Ken Armstrong

Judging Comments:

This is the kind of project that shows why newspapers matter. In this case, lives will be saved and suffering prevented. If not for the reporters' diligence and persistence, information about MRSA deaths would not have been tracked, much less made public, causing the state to act. Outstanding journalism.

Second place

The Seattle Times, Seattle, WA for The favor factory

By David Heath and Christine Willmsen

Judging Comments:

Dogged, relentless reporting yielded a wealth of information about how the system really works. Heath and Willmsen show not only how much influence donors wield, but also what a complex structure has been built to obscure their influence. The database is a masterpiece. This is tremendously important work.

Debby Lowman Award for Distinguished Reporting of Consumer Affairs

No Circulation breakout

First place

The Daily Herald, Everett, WA for Baby bottle brouhaha

By Sarah Jackson

Judging Comments:

Excellent choice of topic, it's an important topic yet not necessarily widely known. Thoroughly covered in an interesting yet concise manner. Good use of local sources. Excellent packaging with main story, art, sidebar and additional resources for consumers to use for more information. I'm sharing this with our newsroom as an example of great work both in content and presentation!

Second place

The Seattle Times, Seattle, WA for Comcast's digital switch

By Brier Dudley

Judging Comments:

The packet takes on a timely consumer issue. It is explained thoroughly - yet in an interesting and entertaining manner. Well coordinated in print and online. Could use more art/graphic presentation as it's a bit "grey"