

# Journal wins mental health issues coverage award

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EDMONTON — The Journal has won the Canadian Mental Health Association Alberta division's communications award for its coverage of mental health issues.

The association recognized the paper at an awards ceremony Saturday morning for articles promoting mental health and reducing the stigma around mental illness.

A volunteer board member with the association's Calgary region, Janice Tye, praised The Journal's coverage of issues at Alberta Hospital Edmonton, including a plan to close beds and to save money by taking free toiletries and snacks away from mentally ill patients.

The plan to move 246 patients out of the hospital and into community beds was later reconsidered and partly reversed, giving the province time to create a long-term provincial mental-health plan which is now in the works.

The association praised the work of Journal reporters Sheila Pratt and Jodie Sinnema, columnists Paula Simons and Scott McKeen, who is currently on unpaid leave while he runs for city council, and guest writer Austin Mardon.

Their work "gave unprecedented profile and presence to the voice of those with severe mental illness and consequently impacted policies and actions taken with regard to their welfare," Tye said.

Pratt and Simons accepted the award during the association's annual general meeting downtown. Simons said the public response to the news stories about Alberta Hospital was remarkable, with letters, website comments and guest columns pouring into the newspaper.

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