



Inlander's Jacob Jones to receive 2014 Mental Health Reporting Award

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Seattle – Aug. 27, 2014 – Jacob Jones, a staff writer for the *Inlander* in Spokane, has been named the 2014 winner of Washington Mental Health Reporting Award for his series on how the criminal justice system handles people living with mental illness. He will receive the award in Seattle at the Sept. 30 anniversary celebration for [Forefront: Innovations in Suicide Prevention](#). The annual award is co-sponsored by Forefront and the [University of Washington Department of Communication](#) Journalism program to honor Washington State journalism that improves the public's understanding of suicide prevention, behavioral illnesses, treatment, recovery, public policy and related topics.

In honoring Jones' work, the judges praised his exceptional reporting and compelling writing. "Jones' vivid storytelling helps readers understand the impact that mental illnesses can have on the family and friends of those in need of treatment, many of whom are also at high risk for suicide," the judges' citation said. "His articles document the kinds of challenges facing criminal-justice systems that are increasingly overburdened by people who have a mental illness.

Jones has worked at the *Inlander* since 2012, primarily covering criminal justice, mental health and natural resource issues. His prize-winning series ran as part of the weekly newspaper's yearlong initiative, "State of Mind," on reforms and challenges throughout the regional mental health system. Jones' stories, "[Locked Away](#)" and "[Changing of the Guard](#)," focused on the problems encountered when the Spokane County Jail becomes a mental health facility, as well as the rough road that Spokane and regional law enforcement traveled before adopting law enforcement Crisis Intervention Team training.

Jones says, "The *Inlander* took on the mental health system to inject a new, localized urgency into the ongoing national debate on how public and private agencies provide care for people with mental illnesses. The stories of Amanda Cook (who took her own life in the Spokane jail) and others stand as unsettling examples of how the system, despite good intentions, has failed.

"I will always carry Amanda Cook's story with me. Her family maintains she could have been saved. Her suicide was not inevitable. Reading her letters, retracing her growing hopelessness, today reflects a broader sense of helplessness as others continue to sit trapped behind bars without treatment," he says.

The award comes with a \$500 prize. The judges were drawn from media, mental health, UW journalism faculty and individuals personally acquainted with suicide risk or loss. Next year's contest will consider entries published, broadcasted or posted between July 1, 2014, and June 30, 2015. Entries can be submitted any time to ffront@uw.edu with 2015 Media Award in the subject line.

The Sept. 30 celebration will take place from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Mountaineers Club, 7700 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115. Reservations can be made at intheforefront.org.



Jacob Jones