

The Sacramento Bee

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P.O. BOX 15779 • 2100 Q STREET • SACRAMENTO • CALIFORNIA 95852

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SCOTT LEBAR

Managing Editor

(916) 321-1182 (office)

(916) 396-0912 (cell)

slebar@sacbee.com

To the judges:

James Flavy Coy Brown stepped off a Greyhound bus in Sacramento with papers from a Nevada state mental hospital and nowhere to turn except for a local shelter and The Sacramento Bee's reporters, Cynthia Hubert and Phillip Reese. Through painstaking and compassionate reporting, they not only helped a lost and confused man, they ended one hospital's long-standing practice of discarding its problems by busing them elsewhere.

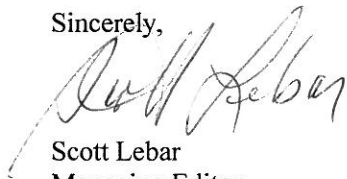
After telling Brown's story, Hubert and Reese sifted through stacks of bus records acquired through public records act requests and found Rawson-Neal Psychiatric Hospital in Las Vegas had bused about 1,500 patients via Greyhound over the last five years to cities nationwide. The reporting showed that the hospital, dealing with funding cuts, simply got rid of patients, dispatching them on buses with bottles of Ensure for journeys to cities where some had never been. Some former patients ended up homeless. Others were simply lost, their families still unsure of their whereabouts. Some were violent offenders, who committed crimes including murder in their new communities.

Hubert and Reese spent months tracking down former patients and others from California to Maryland. They found and interviewed former patients serving prison time, staying in nursing homes and living on the street. They spent days knocking on doors of current and former Rawson-Neal employees in Las Vegas. Reese crisscrossed California researching criminal files and public records. They interviewed hundreds of people on the periphery and at the heart of the story.

Their compelling stories, intensely reported and well told, exemplify what investigative journalism is all about. Because of them, the federal government launched an investigation, Rawson-Neal was stripped of its accreditation by the Joint Commission and the hospital is the focus of two class-action lawsuits. Rawson-Neal fired and disciplined some staff and no longer buses patients without a chaperone. And Nevada legislators increased funding for mental health care. Hubert and Reese uncovered wrong-doing, held powerful institutions accountable, informed the public, and protected the vulnerable. They helped mentally ill patients at the mercy of doctors and administrators.

Brown was put on a bus for 15 hours with three days' medication to a city he had never visited and where he knew no one. Because of the work of Hubert and Reese, James Flavy Coy Brown was reunited with his daughter.

Sincerely,



Scott Lebar
Managing Editor