

Herald reporter wins national honor

By the Herald staff



Chuck Watson, comforts his mother, Lyn Rosler, while Mitizi, Rosler's longtime canine companion, curls up on her chest in a room at the Hospice House in Kennewick. Watson's sister Kippy Myers of Eltopia describes her brother as "the rock of the family." Rosler passed away at the facility two days after this photo was taken, on Oct. 7.

Tri-City Herald staff writer Sara Schilling has won a national award for reporting from a prestigious professional journalism organization.

Schilling's work on hospice care, "Hospice: Learning How to Live," (See story and photos in box to right) was judged the best feature reporting entry in the country for papers up to 50,000 circulation in the 2009 Sigma Delta Chi Awards, sponsored by the Society of Professional Journalists.

Judges chose the winners from more than 1,300 entries in categories covering print, radio, TV and online. The awards recognize outstanding work published or broadcast in 2009.

The awards will be presented Oct. 2 during the 2010 SPJ Convention and National Journalism Conference in Las Vegas.

Schilling, 30, started working for the Herald as an intern in 2004. She covered the Lower Valley before taking over the education and religion beats, earning a handful of regional awards for her reporting and writing.

In 2008, she won the Cassels Award for Religion Reporter of the Year for small newspapers in the Religion Newswriters Association's annual contest for a series of in-depth stories, including a seven-part series that examined the religious beliefs of a handful of diverse Tri-Citians.

"When Sara was an intern, she already displayed solid writing and reporting skills," said Herald Executive Editor Ken Robertson. "For the past six years, she's worked hard to polish both those skills.

"She worked with Herald photographer Bob Brawdy on this story for over three months to capture the personal struggle of Hospice volunteer Chuck Watson, who is battling cancer himself."