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***CREATIVE LOAFING* SENIOR WRITER MARA SHALHOUP HONORED AS ATLANTA'S "JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR"**

ATLANTA — *Creative Loafing* Senior Writer Mara Shalhoup was named "Journalist of the Year 2006" by the Atlanta Press Club at the organization's annual gala Thursday, May 3.

Shalhoup was honored in part for a series, "BMF: Hip-hop's shadowy empire," that ran in three consecutive issues of *Creative Loafing* in December. The articles described the rise of the Black Mafia Family, a cocaine-trafficking network with ties to a music label and various violent crimes in Atlanta. The online version, which can be viewed at atlanta.creativeloafing.com/BMF, was named a finalist last week by the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies (AAN) in the "Web Feature Content" category.

The stories, which garnered a record audience on *CL*'s website, continue to reverberate throughout Atlanta. This week's *CL* cover story, on the life sentence of Mayor Shirley Franklin's former son-in-law for drug-trafficking, is a related follow-up.

"To be recognized by my fellow journalists is a huge honor," Shalhoup said. "I'm deeply flattered. Since late 2004, my editor and I knew what an important story the Black Mafia Family's was. *Creative Loafing* deserves a round of applause for its devotion to publishing the series."

The honors follow numerous national and regional awards for Shalhoup. Named as a finalist in the press club's print category in 2003 and 2004, she's been the recipient of a Clarion Award, a Society of Professional Journalists' Green Eyeshade Award and two AAN Awards.

"We're extremely proud of Mara for the work she did in uncovering and then writing this incredible story," *CL* Editor Ken Edelstein said. "It took a lot of skill, intelligence and particularly guts."

The press club contest, which includes print, broadcast, online and photographic categories, is open to journalists working for Atlanta media outlets or based in Atlanta. Journalists on the Atlanta Press Club's board of directors and Journalist of the Year Selection Committee selected finalists on the basis of "exclusivity, timeliness, demonstrated reportorial skill and impact." As the overall winner, Shalhoup will receive a \$1,000 award.

Creative Loafing/Atlanta is the Southeast's most widely read alternative newsweekly and, according to the independent Media Audit, the second most widely read publication in Georgia.

