



# Health Awareness

## “Lord Of The Rings” Star Sean Astin Talks About Bipolar Disorder And Calls For Earlier Symptom Recognition

(NAPSA)—Actor Sean Astin, best known for his role as Sam Gamgee in the Oscar-winning “Lord of the Rings” film trilogy, is willing to share his personal experience living with a family member diagnosed with bipolar disorder in order to help increase awareness of the symptoms associated with the condition. Astin witnessed the condition’s trademark highs and lows throughout his childhood when his mother, actress Patty Duke, experienced symptoms of undiagnosed bipolar disorder for years before receiving an accurate diagnosis and effective treatment. Duke’s delayed diagnosis is not uncommon and mirrors the results of a new survey of more than 500 people with bipolar disorder, which shows an average delay of 13 years between symptom onset and diagnosis.

The survey, which was conducted online by Harris Interactive and sponsored by AstraZeneca, included 500 persons medically diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

“Though my mom was the one who struggled with the symptoms, the impact of bipolar disorder was felt by my whole family. Her depression was sad and painful to watch, and we’d feel frightened when her mood became manic,” recalls Astin. “We wrongly attributed these extreme moods to the force of her personality. Had she



Courtesy of Rio Films

Actor Sean Astin

understood earlier that her moods and behavior were symptoms of a chemical imbalance that could be treated, I believe she would have sought appropriate medical care and been accurately diagnosed much sooner.”

### Loved Ones Play a Leading Role in Symptom Recognition and Evaluation

Over half of respondents in the survey (56 percent) credited family members, friends, and even co-workers with being the first to notice their symptoms. Over one-third (35 percent) said they would have been unlikely to seek professional help for their condition had others in their life not prompted them to do so.

Mood swings (49 percent), getting into arguments (40 percent)

and reckless behavior (31 percent) were the symptoms most often recognized by loved ones. Over-spending and substance abuse were also symptoms loved ones often recognized first. All these behaviors are associated with manic episodes.

In contrast, survey respondents were most often able to recognize depressive symptoms by themselves, reporting that thoughts of death or suicide, hopelessness and loneliness were the feelings they most often noticed. In fact, 70 percent were initially misdiagnosed solely with depression.

You can find more information about Astin’s family’s story, the symptoms of bipolar disorder and what to do if you are concerned that symptoms are impacting your family at [www.LearnAboutBipolar.com](http://www.LearnAboutBipolar.com).

“I know that family members can help close the time gap between symptom onset and proper diagnosis,” says Astin. “For my family, it was something like 11 or 12 years. In the survey, it was 13 years. I want to help close the gap between symptom recognition and accurate diagnosis. My mom is proof that the road to recovery starts with listening, communicating with empathy and recognizing symptoms.” Astin wants families facing bipolar disorder to know that with the right diagnosis and proper treatment, there is hope.