

THIRTEEN/WNET REVEALS INTIMATE *STORIES OF LUPUS* WHEN TWO WOMEN, DIAGNOSED WITH THE DISEASE, TAKE THE ROAD TRIP OF A LIFETIME TO DOCUMENT THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHERS WHO HAVE LUPUS

Charles Osgood Narrates This Half-Hour Documentary Premiering In October On PBS During National Lupus Awareness Month

Marcia Raymond and Karin Mellberg are women with a mission. Recently diagnosed with lupus, they decided that something had to be done to increase awareness of this debilitating and potentially deadly disease, and to help build a sense of community among the more than 2 million Americans who suffer from it.

Taking their inspiration from the late journalist Charles Kuralt, who died from complications of lupus in 1997, Raymond and Mellberg embarked on an unusual sort of road trip. They traveled 3,200 miles in an RV with a camera crew in tow to eight cities in California, Nevada and Arizona. There, they met others who endure the precarious roller coaster of symptoms, pain, treatment, side affects, flare-ups, and recoveries that come with a diagnosis of lupus.

Their half-hour film, *STORIES OF LUPUS*, is the first documentary to be broadcast on national television that presents an emotional and intimate account of people who are finding ways to live with this unpredictable, often life-threatening, and highly misunderstood disease. Presented by Thirteen/WNET in New York, it premieres in October on PBS (check local listings

for exact dates and times) during national Lupus Awareness Month. The film is narrated by Charles Osgood, anchor of *CBS News Sunday Morning* and *The Osgood File*.

“Our hope for this documentary is that it will be a catalyst for conversation,” Raymond says. “Discussions that would go beyond lupus, and address the daily issues and choices that people living with a chronic illness must face. Through dialogue, we can begin to better understand the impact that a chronic illness has on a mother, a colleague, a neighbor, or a child.”

Although 90 percent of lupus patients are female and the disease commonly strikes young women between the ages of 18 and 45, ***STORIES OF LUPUS*** profiles a wide range of individuals and their families. Their stories of courage and determination put a human face on a disease that, in the words of Mellberg, is “silent, hidden, destructive.”

Brian Darrow was diagnosed as a teenager and has been hospitalized 16 times, but he doesn't let lupus get in the way of his Jiu-Jitsu lessons. Despite the physical challenges faced with lupus, Brian is committed to continuing his Jiu Jitsu education. Libby Campbell was diagnosed three years ago at the age of 12 and wonders how the disease will affect her chances for a normal life in the future. Michelle Handy's marriage and career collapsed after she was diagnosed with lupus. Today she is on welfare and raising three children alone. Sharon Grant-Henry, a former professor, lost the use of her kidneys to the disease, and now must rely on self-dialysis four times a day. She faces tough choices every day about how to move on with her life.

One face viewers may recognize in ***STORIES OF LUPUS*** is that of Mary McDonough, who played the part of Erin on the long-running television series *The Waltons*. In the film, she speaks candidly about the adjustments the disease has forced her to make in her life, especially in her role as a mother and actress. One of McDonough's main concerns is the possibility that her daughter will inherit lupus.

STORIES OF LUPUS gives viewers an overview of the deceptive disease, for which there is no known cause or cure. It addresses the research of this chronic autoimmune disease

that has remained a mystery since the time of Hippocrates. At the film's core is a story within a story and it involves the filmmakers themselves. Both women began the journey and the film with their disease symptoms active, including hair loss, fatigue, rashes, joint and muscle inflammation, and pain. Every day presented physical and emotional challenges. And every day, Raymond and Mellberg had to overcome them.

“Through my own healing process with lupus, and through the process of sharing stories with others living with lupus, I have learned a great deal about courage and the strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity,” Mellberg says. “Lupus has caused me to focus more intently on things that matter to me, and to deal with the fears and unknowns that are a part of this disease. It helped me discover a new life rhythm and balance that has kept me well.”

STORIES OF LUPUS is presented by Thirteen/WNET in New York. It is produced by Mosaic Productions. Producers are Marcia Raymond and Karin Mellberg. Beth Hoppe, Thirteen/WNET's Director of Science Programs, provided oversight for the PBS broadcast. This documentary is available on home videocassette, for more information visit www.storiesoflupus.com. Major funding for ***STORIES OF LUPUS*** is provided by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Robert W. Johnson IV Charitable Trust, The Fuller Foundation, Inc., Joseph Drown Foundation, Jim and Kathy Campbell, See's Candies, Inc., Arthritis Foundation, National Office, Genelabs Technologies, Inc., The Lupus Foundation of America, Inc., National Office, AG Consulting, an ADP, Inc. company, and Robert S. Krupp.

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Thirteen/WNET in New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as ***NATURE***, ***GREAT PERFORMANCES***, ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** and ***CHARLIE ROSE*** – as well as the work of ***BILL MOYERS*** – to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen/WNET reaches millions of viewers each week – airing the best of American public

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television along with its own local productions such as *CITY ARTS* and *REEL NEW YORK*. With educational and community outreach projects that enhance value of its productions Thirteen/WNET takes television "out of the box." And as broadcast and digital media converge, Thirteen/WNET is blazing trails in the creation of Web sites, CD-ROMs, educational software, and other cutting-edge media products. More information about Thirteen/WNET can be found at <http://www.wnet.org>.

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