

NORMAL Releases Powerful New FREE Film, *ED101*, for Use by Schools to Educate Students About Eating Disorders

Documentary style content includes footage from a highly effective rock musical, "nor.mal.," based on a true story about a family's experience battling an eating disorder, and featuring performances by American Idol finalist and Broadway actors.

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New York, NY -- NORMAL (National Organization to build Resilience and Mindfulness through Arts Learning) announced today the release of its powerful new, free documentary-style film intended for use in schools to educate students on eating disorders (ED). See film here:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hB1WYEUZJL0>

The 35-minute film, "*ED101*," sponsored by Timberline Knolls Residential Treatment Center in Illinois, is a free, arts-based learning tool to educate about eating disorders. The film is being circulated to schools and communities nationwide and provides a comprehensive overview of a widespread, yet highly misunderstood, mental illness through the lens of a compelling musical arts piece. Expert commentary and insights are provided through interviews with clinicians, ED association leaders, and family members who have been impacted by the disease. In addition, hopeful journeys of recovery are shared through powerful personal journeys.

"It's so naturalized in this society to lose weight, be thin, be on a diet... to skip your lunch, throw the lunch your mom packed for you away, that people don't report eating disorders because they don't think they have one," according to Carolyn Costin, Founder and Clinical Director of Monte Nido Affiliate Treatment Centers.

Startling, little-known facts revealed in the film include:

- 25 million Americans struggle with an eating disorder (source: NEDA, BEDA)
- 7 million of those struggling with eating disorders are male (source: National Association for Males with Eating Disorders)
- Suicide causes up to 50% of deaths of those with anorexia (source: Univ of Maryland Medical Center)

"It is imperative that leaders in schools and in communities encourage children to start talking about these issues," says filmmaker and director Robyn Hussa, who founded the NORMAL nonprofit in 2006. "One way to help remedy these concerns is

to get kids to start opening up [their feelings and emotions] through the arts," she adds.

At the core of her NORMAL In Schools (NIS) educational program is a 75-minute rock musical *nor.mal*, which demonstrates the healing power of highly artistic, theatrical arts. Since its inception six years ago, the live NIS program has been presented at more than 40 high schools and universities, medical, educational, and arts festivals globally; and reached more than 27,000 individuals, a significant number of whom sought treatment after viewing the program. According to Dr. Laura Lees, Psy.D., CEDS, and Vice-President of NORMAL, "I first saw the musical in an auditorium with 400 high school students, so there was a lot of energy." She goes on to say, "...the most amazing thing was, once the musical started, for the next 75-minutes, you could hear a pin drop."

Performances from the NORMAL rock musical are interspersed throughout *ED101*, and include Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle nominee Kerry Butler, Tony award-nominated Robin de Jesus, American Idol finalist Natalie Weiss, and remarks by Miss America 2008, Kirsten Haglund.

The project is receiving distribution and support from more than 15 nonprofit organizations, including ANAD, BEDA, FED UP INC, LETS Educational Foundation, NAMED, NEDA and others.

The film relates the stories of several families with loved ones who battled ED, ultimately to lose their lives to the devastating illness; the victims are as young as 9 at the onset of EDs, and one's life is cut short at only 19 years. It also shares hopeful journeys of recovery, encouraging early intervention and treatment.

"One of the main causes of relapse for people with eating disorders is an unacknowledged, under-treated, or untreated trauma," says Dr. Kim Dennis of Timberline Knolls, "When someone says post traumatic stress disorder, people think of what we call 'Big T' trauma; there's also 'Little t' trauma" or developmental trauma that can profoundly shape [infants and children] for the rest of their lives."

ED101 is part of an ongoing five-year project, made possible through support from Pink House Foundation, Hilda & Preston Davis Foundation, Joanne and Daniel C. Smith, NORMAL nonprofit patrons and supporters.

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NORMAL nonprofit educates about eating disorders, body image and self-esteem through an array of arts and mindfulness-based programs, suitable for a wide range of audiences, from middle school students and parents, to university students, clinicians and educators. The organization was founded by Robyn Hussa, a 2010 recipient of the Champion in Women's Health Award by Sue Ann Thompson's Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation.