Reverse Shot
Presents

A Lion in the House

Directed by Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert

Video, Color, 225 min.

Official Selection **Sundance Film Festival**
Documentary Feature Competition

Nominee **Best Documentary**
Independent Spirit Awards

Best Documentary Audience Award
Toronto Hot Docs Film Festival

Best Documentary Grand Jury Prize
Nashville Film Festival

Special Jury Citation
Full Frame Film Festival

Special Jury Prize
Cleveland International Film Festival

Press Notes

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SYNOPSIS

A LION IN THE HOUSE is a feature documentary spanning six years in the lives of five American families who each have a child fighting cancer.

All five kids in A LION IN THE HOUSE receive care at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, home to one of the world's top pediatric oncology divisions. Filmmakers Steven Bognar & Julia Reichert, whose own daughter is a childhood cancer survivor, were granted unprecedented access to Cincinnati Children's, filming doctor & nurse rounds meetings, counseling sessions, surgeries, and numerous, challenging encounters between parents and caregivers.

For many families, childhood cancer is a crucible of difficult choices and untested treatments. The film shows differing, at times clashing, points of view, allowing us to grapple with our own ethical decision-making process.

The film raises a number of contemporary societal issues, all through organic documentary storytelling. As we watch the five families of diverse racial and economic backgrounds, we see and feel the economic impact of cancer on families, and how health care disparities add to the burden on poor families. We witness the challenges of surviving cancer, of reclaiming a damaged life in the aftermath of this fight. And we wrestle with the most difficult choices of all – how far to go in fighting for a child's life when it begins to be clear that the child will not survive. Modern medicine offers amazing technology, but it now puts many parents in the role of playing God. Around these issues, A LION IN THE HOUSE vividly shows that our medical advances have outpaced our ability to handle their moral dimensions.

Yet for all the harrowing days, A LION IN THE HOUSE abounds with the spark & rebellious attitude of kids and teenagers determined to keep their spirits unbroken by either their disease or its arduous treatments.

When we meet them, the five kids range in age from 7 to 19. The film unfolds in a present-tense, largely cinema verité form, across the years. We are with the kids, their moms, dads, and siblings, at home, school, work, church, camping, and family trips. The months turn into years, as we go through many ups and downs with each family, creating a journey of both epic and deeply intimate proportions.

A LION IN THE HOUSE also tells the stories of the doctors and nurses on the front lines of the fight to improve survival rates for childhood cancer. These professionals, who go to work each day knowing they may witness the death of a child that they've known & supported for years, bring remarkable clarity and honesty to their own struggles to do this work while retaining their humanity.

Weaving the stories of the five kids, their families and their caregivers, A LION IN THE HOUSE creates an extraordinary and complex portrait of human resilience.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

A LION IN THE HOUSE is truly an epic film in stature and length. At nearly four hours, it is the longest film ever to be selected for the documentary competition at Sundance Film Festival, where it received thunderous standing ovations. *A LION IN THE HOUSE* focuses on the stories of five children: Alex, a 7 year-old bundle of energy, dark eyes and curls; Tim, a mercurial, quick witted 16 year-old with a thousand watt smile; Justin, amiable and stalwart at 19 despite ten years of fighting the disease; Jen, a serious, quiet 6-year old; and Al, a quicksilver, wry 11 year-old.

Filmmakers Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert were given complete access to the children, their families and the medical teams treating them, resulting in stories with extraordinary detail. By taking their cameras inside hospital rooms, family homes, and staff meetings of the doctors and nurses, the filmmakers give audiences a chance to witness families and medical professionals as they wrestle with difficult questions and negotiate a plan of action in a field where there are few guideposts and fewer guarantees.

The story of the film's genesis, as well as its unfolding aftermath, is a mirror of the pervasive reality of cancer. Several years ago, Dr. Robert Arceci, a prominent oncologist, contacted filmmakers Bognar and Reichert to suggest that they make a film about childhood cancer. Dr. Arceci had been inspired by the film *Hoop Dreams*, and sought to find filmmakers who could make a similarly styled long-form narrative documentary that follows families facing childhood cancer.

At that time, Dr. Arceci had no idea that Bognar and Reichert had just seen their own teenage daughter through a year of chemotherapy and radiation. Anxious about going back into this world, yet drawn to a subject that had so deeply touched them, the filmmakers accepted Dr. Arceci's offer to take up residence on wing 5A of Cincinnati Children's Hospital, where he was chief oncologist. They would spend much of the next eight years documenting five children and their families to create *A LION IN THE HOUSE*.

Filming began in 1997, and continued into 2005. Altogether, the filmmakers shot over 525 hours of digital video. The final film contains less than 1 percent of the raw footage. The filmmakers began editing the footage in 2000. The first full rough cut, completed in 2002, ran over 20 hours. By 2004, the film was down to 8 hours. And in 2005, it found its final length of 3 hours 45 minutes.

Due to the recent changes in privacy and security laws, including the federal enactment of HIPAA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, videotaping in any hospital is now much more restricted. If they were starting today, Bognar and Reichert could not make this film, because of HIPAA rules.

The film they created owes its unflinching intimacy and its depth to the generous and brave cooperation the families and to Cincinnati Children's Hospital's doctors and nurses.

"Cancer goes hand in hand with huge uncertainty," said Bognar. "As we were filming, we saw how complex so many of the choices are, not only for the families but for the doctors as well. This movie, like real life, all happens in the present tense. No one knew what the outcomes would be."

Julia Reichert recalls, "We were present for intimate, scary, inspiring and altogether heart-rending events. Points of view diverged and nerves frayed as very hard decisions were faced every day. Everyone we observed cared deeply, no one was perfect, but no one a bad guy - everyone was trying their best."

A LION in the HOUSE
Film Festival Screenings and Awards

Sundance Film Festival
Feature Documentary Competition

Independent Spirit Awards
Nominee, Best Documentary

Toronto Hot Docs Film Festival
Audience Award for Best Documentary

Full Frame Film Festival
Special Jury Citation

Nashville Film Festival
Grand Jury Prize for Best Feature Documentary

Cleveland International Film Festival
Special Jury Prize

Brit Doc Film Festival
Grand Jury Prize Runner Up

International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam (IDFA)

Santa Barbara Film Festival

Jerusalem International Film Festival

Sarasota Film Festival

Philadelphia International Film Festival

Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival

New Zealand Film Festival

Galway Film Festival

Documenta Madrid

Chicago International Documentary Festival

Excerpt from the Congressional Record
(House of Representatives - June 21, 2006)

Rep. Deborah PRYCE of Ohio:

Each day, two classrooms full of children are diagnosed, two classrooms, and I rise today for the children who will be diagnosed today and for their families who love them.

This week, we celebrate Gold Ribbon Days, a time for children and their families to come to Washington, D.C., to raise awareness about pediatric cancer.

We also celebrated the premier tonight of the much anticipated documentary called **"A Lion in the House."** This film, produced by two brilliant Ohio filmmakers, is extraordinary. It offers an unprecedented look at the cancer journey of five young people and their families over a 6-year period. For those of us who have traveled on our own journey, this film depicts our experiences, our struggles and our pain. For those of you who have not traveled on this journey, this film will give you empathy and compassion.

Never before has such a delicate and serious topic like childhood cancer been brought to the public's attention in such a powerful and meaningful way; real families sharing stories, the very, very private moments, the highs and the lows, the roller coaster of never knowing what lies around the corner, the confusion, the frustration and the darkness, the joy and the pain, the love and the loss.

The families we meet in the film, their resilience, courage and wisdom, remind us that while it is human nature to question the sanity and injustice of why such a tragedy has befallen those of us who have been touched by pediatric cancer, we must find a way to channel our pain and our anger into action to change the course of this disease. That is what Gold Ribbon Days is all about, and this resolution is part of our action plan.

I want to recognize and thank the pediatric cancer organizations, the advocates, the children and their families who are waging their own battle against cancer. They are the tireless soldiers in our army, and until we rid the world of the scourge that is childhood cancer, we must keep up our strong army and we must keep up the fight, and we shall.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

A Lion in the House
From the **Film Festivals**

"A monumental work destined to be considered one of the major documentary achievements of our time, *A Lion in the House* is among the most moving experiences one can have at the cinema. At four hours in length, its duration is an important part of this singular film. Its subject, five families who over six years cope with and confront the struggles of children diagnosed with cancer, is difficult and extreme. Yet the cumulative effect goes deeper than sadness, touching the core of human courage, compassion and strength. Filmmakers Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert (whose own teenaged daughter is a cancer survivor) document this story with respect and dignity. Intimate, intense and unflinching*, A Lion in the House* is ultimately an inspiring drama of ordinary people enduring impossible choices and uncertainty."

- Sean Farnel, Director of Programming, *Toronto Hot Docs Film Festival*

"An emotionally gripping, heart-wrenching, but also uplifting journey that takes us to the very core of the documentary impulse: that filmmakers be passionate, committed, persevering and unflinchingly honest in their pursuit of stories that touch us, that move us and ultimately -- that change us."

- *2006 Full Frame Documentary Film Festival Jury* (Alan Berliner, Keith Brown, Jannat Gargi and Nathaniel Kahn)

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

STEVEN BOGNAR

All four of Steven Bognar's films premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. His first, the feature documentary *Personal Belongings* went on to screen in 27 other festivals including IDFA, San Francisco, Gen Art and Atlanta, where it won the audience award. *Personal Belongings* has also screened at Lincoln Center, the Wexner Center for the Arts and the Northwest Film Center. The film aired nationally in the U.S. on the PBS series *P.O.V.*, in France/Germany on ARTE and internationally in nine other countries.

Bognar's documentary short *Picture Day* screened in 20 film festivals internationally, including IDFA, Full Frame and the British Short Film Festival. *Picture Day* also screened at the Guggenheim Museum and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences Contemporary Documentary series. *Gravel,* his experimental narrative short, played many festivals after its Sundance premiere, and is seen on the Sundance Channel. Bognar has written for the *Independent Film & Video Monthly* and *Indiewire*, and has worked for 12 years as a media arts educator in schools, teaching media literacy to thousands of kids.

Over the years, Steven Bognar has worked as a dishwasher, apple orchard farmhand, delivery driver, busboy, movie projectionist, grip, sound recordist and cinematographer. He is the recipient of grants and/or fellowships from the Creative Capital Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the MacDowell Colony, the Ohio Arts Council and, with Julia Reichert, the Rockefeller Foundation.

Filmography:

A LION IN THE HOUSE (1997-2006) 220 minutes, Documentary.
Director/Producer/Camera/Editor
Major support provided by ITVS, the Centers for Disease Control, the Lance Armstrong Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Ohio Arts Council.

See Attached Festival History

GRAVEL (2003) Narrative Short.
Writer/Director/Editor

Sundance Film Festival
Ongoing broadcast on the Sundance Channel
Los Angeles Film Festival
Nantucket Film Festival
Black Maria Film and Video Festival, Director's Citation Award

Atlanta Film and Video Festival
Nashville Film Festival, Honorable Mention, Best Short Film
Cleveland International Film Festival
Big Muddy Film Festival
Hamptons International Film Festival
Raindance Film Festival, London
Milwaukee International Film Festival - Winner, Best Short Film
Palm Springs Int'l Short Film Festival
Chicago Underground Film Festival
Wexner Center for the Arts
Flicker Film Series, Chapel Hill NC
Fringe Film Screening Series, Mammoth CA
Appalachian Film Festival, Huntington, WVA

PICTURE DAY (2000) 7 minutes, 35mm/Video.
Writer/Producer/Director/Camera/Editor
Sundance Film Festival world premiere
Black Maria Film Festival, Director's Choice award
Florida Film Festival, Best Short Documentary award
Full Frame Documentary Film Festival
Cleveland International Film Festival
British Short Film Festival
Atlanta Film & Video Festival
International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam
Guggenheim Museum
Anthology Film Archives
Brooklyn Arts Exchange
Wexner Center for the Arts
Figuera de Foz Film Festival, Portugal
Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences Contemporary Documentary series

WAITING FOR MARTY (1999) 8 minutes, Video, Documentary.
Writer/Producer/Director/Camera
Broadcast nationally on the INDEPENDENT FILM CHANNEL series "Split Screen."

THE DREAM CATCHER (1999) 99 minutes, 35mm, feature.
Producer
Rotterdam International Film Festival
American Independent Visions series at Lincoln Center
Instanbul Film Festival
Maine Film Festival
Paris Film Festival - Special Jury Prize
Los Angeles Film Festival, Best Director award

Locarno International Film Festival,
Youth Jury Award for Best First Film
Thessaloniki International Film Festival,
Special Jury Prizes, Acting & Cinematography
Rencontres Du Cinema á Paris
Deauville Festival of American Cinema
Lincoln Center "Independent's Night" series

PERSONAL BELONGINGS (1996) 63 minutes, 16mm, Documentary.
Writer/Producer/Director/Cam/Editor
Sundance Film Festival
National PBS Broadcast on P.O.V.
San Francisco International Film Festival,
Winner, Golden Gate Award
Chicago International Film Festival, Winner, Silver Hugo Award
Atlanta Film & Video Festival,
Winner, Audience Award for Best Film
CineQuest -- San Jose Film Festival, Winner, Best Documentary
Black Maria Film Festival, Winner, Director's Choice Award
Ann Arbor Film Festival, Winner, Best First Film Award
South by Southwest Film Festival, finalist, Documentary Award,
Cleveland International Film Festival
Gen Art Film Festival, New York
Human Rights Film Festival, Canada
IDFA - International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam
Sarajevo Film Festival
Sheffield Documentary Film Festival, England
Valladolid Film Festival, Spain
Wellington Film Festival, New Zealand
Lincoln Center, New York
911 Media Arts Center, Seattle
Northwest Film Center, Portland
Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus
Appalshop Arts & Cultural Center
Cleveland Cinematheque
Pacific Film Archive
Stanford University
Dorothy & Lillian Gish Theatre
Cornell Cinema
Anthology Film Archives

JULIA REICHERT
Reichert is a two-time Academy Award Nominee for Best Feature Documentary for *Seeing Red* and *Union Maids*. These films and two others, *Growing Up Female* and *Methadone - An American Way Of Dealing*, all screened nationally in the U.S. on PBS. Reichert wrote, produced and directed the feature film *Emma & Elvis* (which screened at numerous international film festivals), and produced (with Steven Bognar) *The Dream Catcher*, a feature film directed by Ed Radtke. *The Dream Catcher* has screened in over 20 international film festivals, won numerous awards and is seen on the Sundance Channel.

Parallel to her filmmaking career, Julia Reichert has worked for years building the independent film community. *Filmmaker Magazine* recently named her one of the godmothers of American Independent film. On a national level, Reichert co-founded New Day Films, a distribution co-operative for independent films, and The Film Fund, a foundation that supported the making of social issue media, and which led to the creation of the Independent Feature Project. Reichert is also Professor of Motion Pictures at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

Reichert has written for the *Independent Film & Video Monthly,* authored the classic *Doing It Yourself, A Handbook on Independent Film Distribution,* and a chapter of *With Both Eyes Open, Seeing Beyond Gender, edited by Johnson and Kalvern.*

Reichert's work has received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ohio Arts Council, the American Film Institute, ITVS and several corporations. She has received a Fulbright Fellowship and with Steven Bognar is a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow, and has received support from the Ohio Arts Council and the MacDowell Colony.

Filmography:

A LION IN THE HOUSE (1997-2006) 220 minutes, Documentary.
Director/Producer/Camera/Sound/Editor
Major support provided by ITVS, the Centers for Disease Control, the Lance Armstrong Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Ohio Arts Council.
See attached festival history.

GRAVEL (2003) Short Narrative Film. Producer

See festival history above.

THE DREAM CATCHER (1999) 99 minutes, 35mm, Feature. Producer
See festival history above.

EMMA & ELVIS (1991) 105 minutes, Feature.
Director/Co-writer/Co-producer

Theatrically distributed by Northern Arts Entertainment
Broadcast on National Television in Canada, Germany, Greece, Ireland, & Finland
Singapore Film Festival
Cannes Film Festival
Edinburgh Film Festival
Jerusalem Film Festival
Hawaii Film Festival
Seattle Film Festival
Cleveland Film Festival

SEEING RED (1983) 100 minutes, Documentary, Feature.
Co-created with James Klein.
Academy Award Nomination, Best Feature Documentary
Selected in 1989 as one of five feature documentaries representing American work of this decade for the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Documentary, hosted by the National Film Board of Canada.

Cablecast on several cable arts channels and broadcast on nine European Networks
Telluride and New York Film Festivals, Premiere
Chicago International Film Festival, Hugo winner
American Film Festival, Blue Ribbon
Festival del Popoli, Florence, Italy, Special Jury Prize
Festival Portugal, Figuera Da Foz, Main Prize
Berlin Film Festival, invitation
Festival Internacional de Cinema de Valladolid, Spain
International Public Television Seminar (INPUT), Marseilles
Festival of New Cinema, Montreal, Canada
Sydney Film Festival, Australia
PBS National Broadcast (1986)

UNION MAIDS (1976) 50 minutes,16mm, Documentary, Feature. Co-creator with James Klein.
Academy Award Nomination, Best Feature Documentary.

American Film Festival, Blue Ribbon
Leipzig International Film Festival,
Special Women's Federation Prize
Lille International Film Festival, France
Chicago International Film Festival, Certificate of Merit
Sydney, Australia Film Festival
Edinburgh International Film Festival
Festival de Cinema, Nyon
Festival of Festivals, Toronto
Flaherty Film Seminar
Portland, San Francisco and Chicago Art Museums
Walker Art Gallery, Minneapolis
Sheldon Art Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska
PBS national broadcast (1977)

METHADONE: AN AMERICAN WAY OF DEALING (1974)
60 minutes, Documentary,
Co-creator with James Klein.

PBS national broadcast (1978)
Broadcast on Independent Focus, WNET-New York (1981)
Festival dei Popoli, Florence, Italy
Edinburgh International Film Festival
Mannheim International Film Week, Germany
Leipzig International Film Festival
San Francisco Film Festival
American Film Festival, Special Citation in John Grierson competition
Flaherty Film Seminar
Public Television Film Seminar.

MEN'S LIVES (1975) 45 minutes, Documentary.
Co-producer with Josh Hanig, Will Roberts, and James Klein.

Student Academy Award, Best Documentary
Mannheim International Film Week, Gold Ducat
American Film Festival, Blue Ribbon
National Council on Family Relations, Family Life Award
San Francisco Film Festival, Special Jury Award
Flaherty Film Seminar
PBS national broadcast (1979)

GROWING UP FEMALE (1970) 50 minutes, Documentary. Co-creator with James Klein.

Whitney Museum of American Art
Pesaro International Film Festival
Montreal International Film Festival
British National Film Theatre
Mannheim International Film Week
Danish Women's Film Festival
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Flaherty Film Seminar
Public Television Film Seminar
PBS national broadcasts (1974) (1975)

MELISSA GODOY, Line Producer

Line Producer of **A Lion in the House** and Project Director of ***mylion.org***, Godoy develops independent film and programming for public television. Her forthcoming production, **Do Not Go Gently**, about the power of imagination in aging, with narrator Walter Cronkite, will be offered by American Public Television in January 2007. **Classical Quest**, a film that compares classical music to time travel, has been airing on PTV from 2000 to the present. In 2004, Godoy completed the interactive virtual community for violinists, **violinmasterclass.com**, currently used in over 25 countries. Godoy was the coordinating producer for the award-winning NEA & NEH-funded High Definition installation in the Cincinnati Art Museum. In 2003, she served as script supervisor to Julie Dash on **Brothers Of The Borderland**; and in 2004, she directed **What Is Freedom?**, both large screen projections at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. During the last presidential election, Godoy was a field producer/director of photography for the cinéma verité feature, **Election Day**, by Katy Chevigny. Godoy has also produced HD spots for BET and Procter & Gamble. Her programs have earned numerous industry awards including two regional Emmys. She produces **Viewfinder**, a monthly talk show about independent filmmaking on Cincinnati's public television station, CET.

KAREN Y. DURGANS, Associate Producer

National Outreach Manager for the LION project has worked for over 15 years as a counselor, social worker and advocate to at-risk and institutionalized youth and to families in high-risk environments. She knows how to reach underserved communities. Durgans has also worked as an independent filmmaker on a **The Visionaries** television series episode, "American International Health Alliance-Partners in Health" that aired on public television in 2004. She has two Masters Degrees, in Social Work and Media & Philanthropy and is a Licensed Professional Counselor.

A Lion in the House
Credit List

photographed, recorded, produced, directed by
Steven Bognar & Julia Reichert

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James Klein
Mary Lampson
Jaime Meyers

associate editors
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Alice Goguen
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Carl Reeverts
Lela Reichert Klein
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Christian Totty

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Karen Y. Durgans

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Yvonne Welbon

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Thanos Fatouros
Lela Reichert Klein

original score by
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Charles Engstrom

post production assistants

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Amy Cunningham
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Alex Mangen
Annie Reichert
Joe Telich

post-production superwoman
Ann Rotolante

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Glue Editing & Design, New York City

colorist / on-line editor
Steve Pequignot

on-line assistant
Michael Schreck

post production sound
Sound One Corporation, New York City

re-recording mixer
Reilly Steele

sound designer / foley & ambiance
John Mays

foley fx ambiance editor
Amy Cunningham

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Nicholas Renbeck
Jeff Stern
Stuart Stanley
John Werner

music engineer
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William Orrico

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Joe Tritschler, engineer

additional post production sound
John McDaniel, Sonic Arts, Cincinnati
Pete Winter, Winterstone Productions, Tallahassee

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executive producer for ITVS
Sally Jo Fifer

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Susan Howarth
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Diana Jeffery
Eric Johnson
Russ Johnson
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Lauren Heaton
Maureen Lynch
Margaret McGurk
Carol Mintz
Gordon Quinn
Deborah Shaffer
Mary Sheridan
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Dr. Franklin O. Smith
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Patrick Wickham
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John Bognar
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Jeff Huntington
Diana Jeffery
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Michelle MacLean
Asa Mader
Rami Marcus
Annetta Marion
Joshua Marston
Jim McKay
Barbara McQuiston
Jonathan McNeal
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Galen Miller
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Tussing Elementary School, Pickerington, Ohio
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American Academy of Pediatrics
American Cancer Society
Association of Oncology Social Work
Association of Pediatric Oncology Nurses
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Children's Cause for Cancer Advocacy
CureSearch: Childhood Cancer Foundation
CureSearch: Children’s Oncology Group
Gilda’s Club Worldwide
Health Ministries Association
Hope Street Kids
Intercultural Cancer Council
Lance Armstrong Foundation
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Nurses Association, Inc.
National Cancer Institute
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
Oncology Nursing Society
Padres Contra El Cáncer

Songs

"Truck In A Field"
Composed by Charles Engstrom
Performed by Sonny Kompanek
Published by Alligator Rouge Music (ASCAP)
From the Orion motion picture "Ulee's Gold"
Courtesy of MGM Music Inc.
Under license from Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.

"Visiting Day"
Composed by Charles Engstrom
Performed by Sonny Kompanek
Published by Alligator Rouge Music (ASCAP)
From the Orion motion picture "Ulee's Gold"
Courtesy of MGM Music Inc.
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"When it Don't Come Easy"
Written and performed by Patty Griffin
From the album "Impossible Dream"
©2004 Almo Music Corp/One Big Love Music (ASCAP)
Courtesy of ATO Records

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for

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