

A Lion in the House

a film by Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

A LION IN THE HOUSE: Series Overview

Unlike many other childhood illnesses, cancer leaves an indelible mark on the life of a family. A LION IN THE HOUSE offers an unprecedented look at the cancer journeys of five young people, their families, and caregivers over a six-year period. These five stories unfold with intimacy, compassion, and honesty as we witness their struggles, their despair, and their triumphs.

A LION IN THE HOUSE raises many complex and difficult issues. While one family grapples with searing questions about when to stop fighting the disease, another faces the dilemma of how to feel "normal" again when treatment succeeds, but fear still lurks in the background. The series has broad-ranging relevance, because technologically advanced medicine creates ethical dilemmas for overwhelming numbers of families today.

During the program's five cancer journeys, it also becomes apparent that disparities in diagnosis, support services, and outcomes are often linked to socioeconomic status and other factors that have little to do with the disease. The filmmakers look beyond examining rooms and hospital corridors to let us see the whole child, the *entire* family, and the physicians, nurses, teachers, and other caregivers who become key players in the battle for the life of a child.

Through this ground-breaking PBS mini-series event, we come face to face with challenging questions such as the effect of late diagnosis on outcomes; how many experimental treatments a child should face; why one parent can be a full-time caregiver to her child while another struggles to hold onto a job with medical benefits; and what constitutes the difference between "giving up" and "letting go."

A LION IN THE HOUSE was initiated by Dr. Robert Arceci, then chief oncologist at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, home to a leading pediatric oncology division. Dr. Arceci, having seen the landmark documentary "Hoop Dreams," saw the potential for a documentary to open a national dialogue about childhood cancer. He invited award-winning filmmakers Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert (whose daughter is a childhood cancer survivor) into the hospital and gave them total access to make an independent film. Five remarkable and courageous families opened their lives and homes to the filmmakers.

Over the course of the series, viewers will experience the same uncertainty faced by these families. Ultimately, each of the five journeys depicted in A LION IN THE HOUSE offers lessons and challenges that demand a response. This harrowing and uplifting series chronicles how families respond to crisis, how relationships are put to the test, how courage is found in unlikely places, and how humor and the energy of youth are powerful medicine.

Get involved! Join the LION IN THE HOUSE Community Engagement Campaign.

**For more information: www.itvs.org/outreach/lioninthehouse
E-mail: outreach@itvs.org**



**Coming to Independent Lens
on PBS in June 2006**

