



Airing January 4-6, 2010 on PBS  
[pbs.org/thisemotionallife](http://pbs.org/thisemotionallife)

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## FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA, DR. JILL BIDEN JOIN BLUE STAR FAMILIES, *THIS EMOTIONAL LIFE* PRODUCERS TO SUPPORT MILITARY FAMILIES

### New PBS Documentary Explores Often Difficult Search for Happiness

Washington, DC, Nov. 11, 2009 – In honor of the 1.8 million men and women who have been deployed in America's Armed Services and their families, Vulcan Productions, NOVA/WGBH and PBS are honored to join Blue Star Families in a Veterans Day program featuring First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden. In the first part of the event, community volunteers on the George Washington University campus gathered to prepare 500 care packages for military families. Later, Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden joined dozens of representatives from civilian and military organizations to honor those working in support of military families.

Vulcan Productions is working with Blue Star Families as part of a multi-year, multi-platform campaign intended to help people live happier, more meaningful lives by better understanding and managing their emotions. The cornerstone of the groundbreaking project is a PBS documentary, *This Emotional Life*, premiering January 4-6, 2010, at 9 p.m. (check local listings), and hosted by renowned Harvard psychologist and best-selling author of *Stumbling on Happiness* Daniel Gilbert. The three-part series, a co-production of NOVA/WGBH Science Unit and Vulcan Productions, weaves together the compelling personal stories of ordinary people searching for happiness with the latest information on brain science research, along with revealing comments from celebrities such as Richard Gere, Chevy Chase and Alanis Morissette.

The filmmakers from Kunhardt McGee Productions were granted intimate access to the struggles of ordinary people from all walks of life, including three veterans who have bravely faced the physical, mental and emotional challenges experienced in connection with their service. The film also includes interviews with experts who are working to help returning service members and their families overcome challenges to emotional wellness.

Bob Shumaker, who spent eight years in solitary confinement as a prisoner of war in Vietnam and is featured in the documentary, will participate in the Veterans Day service project. "As I said in *This Emotional Life*, longing to be with my family again is what kept me going all those years," Shumaker said. "I want the families of those deployed today to know how much their sacrifices are appreciated by our entire country."

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A Co-Production of the  
NOVA/WGBH Science Unit and  
Vulcan Productions, Inc.  
A film by Kunhardt McGee Productions



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Early estimates from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs indicate that 15 to 20 percent of service men and women currently in combat will return to the United States suffering from symptoms related to combat stress, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Currently, 300,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are suffering from PTSD or major depression.

Following January's airing of the documentary, Vulcan Productions will begin distributing a new resource to military families titled "The Family Guide to Military Deployment," developed with input from Blue Star Families and other military family and mental health experts. The Guide is designed to help military families understand and prepare for the emotional challenges of the deployment cycle, with tips on how to ease the process for children, information about the early warning signs for PTSD and pathways to seek help.

"For the past eight years, America's military families have served through a constant cycle of deployment in support of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. *This Emotional Life* and the Family Guide are a meaningful show of support and outreach to our families that will help give them a roadmap to wellness," said Claire Woodward, Executive Director, Blue Star Families.

In addition to Blue Star Families, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has joined Vulcan Productions as a participant in the project. "*This Emotional Life* is an ambitious effort, and SAMHSA is pleased to be involved and to contribute and provide Americans with the help they need," said A. Kathryn Power, M.Ed., Director of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) at SAMHSA.

"The Family Guide to Military Deployment" is one of two toolkits being produced by Vulcan that were developed as part of research conducted during the making of the documentary series. A second toolkit, addressing early childhood attachment, "Early Moments Matter," offers information about how parents and caregivers can develop strong attachments with their children, which is the cornerstone of social and emotional development. SAMHSA's Health Information Network (SHIN) will be handing fulfillment for both the attachment and deployment toolkits for the life of the project.

"Military families are an untapped resource of strength for this nation, a force multiplier for our service men and women," said Steve Robinson, veteran advocate and a key advisor on the Guide. "When our service members are deployed, the families in a sense go with them. We owe it to our military families - and to the defense of our nation - to provide them with the resources and skills they need to keep their families strong. I am proud to be a part of this effort. This is how a grateful nation says thanks - with deeds and not just words."

In addition to the Guide, the series is complemented by a content-rich Web site, [www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife](http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife). The Web site provides expert-vetted resources and opportunities to build social support networks around topics highlighted in the series, including PTSD and early attachment, as well as how to heal strained or damaged relationships, stress, depression, grief, resilience and our pursuit of happiness.

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Leading medical and health sciences organizations from around the country recognize the potential impact of this multi-faceted project and are assisting in developing content. They will also be taking part in events and distributing materials and resources. Partners include the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Mental Health America, the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance and Mayo Clinic.

### **About the Project Partners:**

**Vulcan Productions** is the independent film production company founded by investor and philanthropist Paul G. Allen in 1997. Vulcan Productions devotes itself exclusively to producing independent films of unique vision and artistic quality. Through its collaborative partnerships with established and emerging filmmakers, Vulcan Productions explores creative opportunities that result in engaging and inspirational story telling. [www.vulcanproductions.com](http://www.vulcanproductions.com)

**NOVA/WGBH Science Unit** WGBH Boston is America's preeminent public broadcasting producer, the source of fully one-third of PBS' prime-time lineup, along with some of public television's best-known lifestyle and children's programs and many public radio favorites. One of its premier programs, NOVA, is a production of the NOVA/WGBH Science Unit. Now in its 36th year of broadcasting, NOVA is the most popular science series on American television and is seen in more than 100 countries. It is also one of television's most acclaimed series, having won every major television award, most of them many times over. [www.wgbh.org/](http://www.wgbh.org/) and [pbs.org/nova](http://pbs.org/nova)

**Kunhardt McGee Productions** (formally Kunhardt Productions) was founded in 1987 by Peter W. Kunhardt, a veteran of ABC News and the winner of three national Emmy Awards. Dyllan McGee, Kunhardt's longtime colleague, became a partner in the company in 2008. The company specializes in multi-platform documentary programming crafted to bring cutting-edge scholarship to popular audiences. [www.kunhardtmcgee.com](http://www.kunhardtmcgee.com)

**Method** is a brand experience agency that helps organizations and businesses harness the competitive power of design. With deep expertise in research, strategy, design and technology, Method offers a rigorous, intelligent approach to solving complex brand problems in the physical and digital realms. [www.method.com](http://www.method.com)

**Cause & Affect** is an innovative agency operating at the nexus of media and social change, with the objective of creating meaningful public engagement on a wide variety of issues. Led by Meredith Blake, the architect of the social action campaign accompanying Al Gore's Academy Award-winning documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, Cause & Affect brings widespread attention to causes by partnering with influential individuals or organizations that possess considerable resources, visibility and credibility. [www.causeaffect.com](http://www.causeaffect.com)

**Mission Measurement** helps nonprofits, foundations and corporations measure and improve their social impact through strategy and measurement consulting, training and data services. As the result of their work, organizations have been able to improve the effective delivery of their services, increase the visibility of their work, achieve financial sustainability and communicate results to key stakeholders. [www.missionmeasurement.com](http://www.missionmeasurement.com)