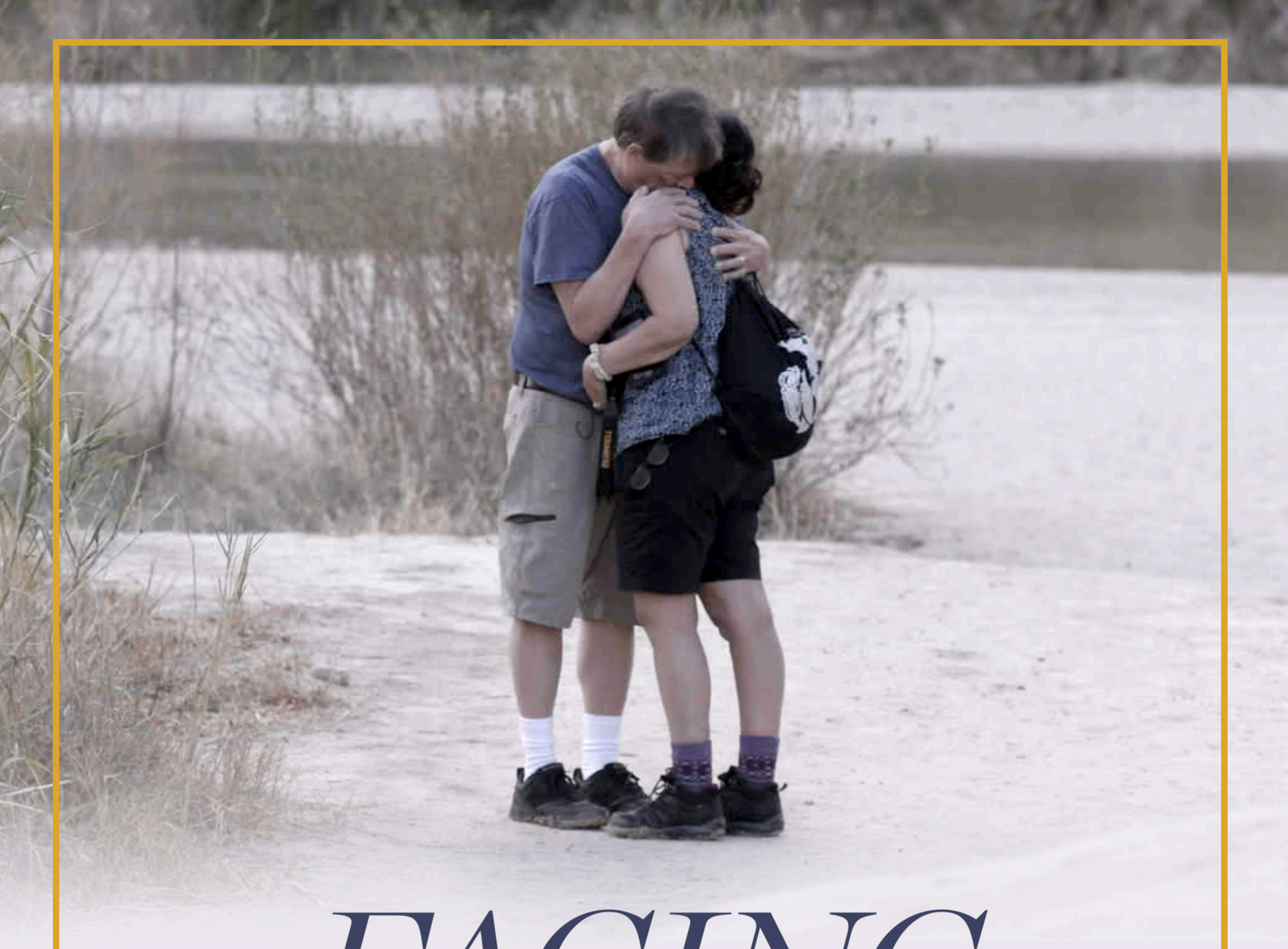

FACING THE WIND

APT American Public Television

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ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

FACINGTHEWINDFILM.COM FTWFILM FACINGTHEWINDFILM

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This Electronic Press Kit is intended for use by public television stations, journalists and other publishers to support coverage of FACING THE WIND.

About the Film

> ***"What an emotional, tender, exquisitely rendered film about such a horrific disease. I wasn't expecting the love story that so beautifully developed on screen."***

Facing the Wind follows two women, whose lives are irrevocably changed by their husbands' diagnosis with Lewy body dementia (LBD) —a widespread, but little-known condition.

After struggling to find information about her husband's disease, Linda Szypula starts a podcast about LBD with Curry Wisenhunt, a Texan truck driver, who also has the disease.

Their efforts grow into a unique online support community for those living with the disease and those caring for them. In a support group, Linda meets Carla Preyer, who has just quit her job to care for her husband Patrick. They bond over their shared challenges and the dark humor they use to cope.

Linda and Jim plan a "go-for-broke" road trip to see the country and visit friends from the support group. But only weeks into the trip, things begin to go awry, as Jim struggles with the travel. Meanwhile, Carla plans a ceremony to renew her wedding vows, but Patrick takes a turn for the worse. As their husbands begin to disappear into dementia, Linda and Carla grow closer. Their friendship and their connection to the support group help them deal with their grief, rise to the demands of caregiving, and emerge whole on the other side.

Press Photos





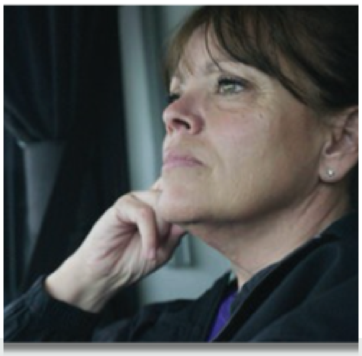





DOWNLOAD THE PHOTOS HERE

The Characters

> *"The women at the center of the film are incredible. I will be thinking about this film for days."*



Linda Szypula, 57, had a tough childhood, but when she met Jim Szypula everything changed. They had three beautiful kids and an idyllic family life. When Jim's Lewy body dementia fractures that picture, Linda does everything possible to hold the disease at bay – and hold herself together. She worries that she won't be able to be there for Jim when he needs her most.

Jim Szypula, 67, was in a rock band in his 20s. In his 30s, he became an electrician, husband, and a loving, hands-on dad. His Lewy body dementia came on slowly in his early 60s, but eventually cost him his job. Playing the guitar remains his refuge and joy, but he struggles with the reality that his condition is progressing.

Carla Preyer, 60, is a hairdresser and a devout Christian with an earthy sense of humor. She married Patrick Preyer, an OR nurse and the love of her life, at 39. Now her world revolves around his 24/7 dementia care. She is an extraordinary caregiver, but the demands can still be overwhelming. She relies on her faith and the sisterhood of Lewy body spouses to help her keep going.

Curry Whisenhunt, 61, worked for years in the Texas oil fields. Later he was a long-haul truck driver, until his strange hallucinations forced him to quit. After being diagnosed with LBD, Curry started blogging about his struggles. Later he and Linda Szypula started a podcast that now reaches people in 65 countries. He runs a weekly support group for those with the disease.

The Filmmakers

Facing the Wind is the latest collaboration of award-winning **director Deirdre Fishel** and **producer Tony Heriza.** Their groundbreaking film *Care*, funded by the Ford and MacArthur Foundations, shed light on America's broken eldercare system. Deirdre and Tony both have family members with dementia and share deep empathy for those with the disease and their caregivers.

DIRECTOR Deirdre Fishel has directed documentaries and dramas that have been broadcast in 35 countries worldwide. Her feature doc *Women in Blue* (2020) co-produced with ITVS and funded by the Tribeca Institute and IDA looks at the lives of women officers trying to reform the Minneapolis Police Department in the years leading up to the murder of George Floyd. It premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and was broadcast on PBS' Independent Lens. Fishel's other projects include the groundbreaking documentary *STILL DOING IT: The Intimate Lives of Women Over 65* which premiered at SXSW, *Suicide on Campus* a web documentary produced in conjunction with The New York Times Magazine, and *Risk*, a dramatic feature which premiered in competition at Sundance. Fishel is a professor and Director of the BFA in film at the City College of New York.

PRODUCER Tony Heriza is a documentary filmmaker, writer, and teacher with a lifetime commitment to the power of media to spark social change. A member-owner of New Day Films, he has produced and distributed films on a wide range of social issues and has twice been chosen as a filmmaker envoy for the U. S. State Department's American Film Showcase. Tony produced *Care* (2016) and co-produced and directed *Concrete, Steel and Paint* (2009) and *Art of Survival* (2024).

The Team

CINEMATOGRAPHER
Eric Phillips-Horst has shot independent films that premiered at Sundance, Tribeca, New York Film Festival, and HotDocs.

EDITOR
Flávia de Souza most recently edited "Aftershock," which premiered at Sundance 2022. Her work has been seen on HBO, PBS, Arté, Hulu and the Discovery Channel.

CONSULTING EDITOR
Toby Shimin has edited seven documentaries that premiered at Sundance, including "Buck", which was short-listed for an Academy Award.

COMPOSER
Chad Cannon's compositions include the score to the Oscar-winning Netflix documentary "American Factory".

CONSULTING PRODUCER
Susan Margolin is a pioneer in home entertainment and digital distribution and has produced documentaries that premiered on HBO, Starz and POV.

Director's Statement

Even though almost every person will eventually need care or be a caregiver, our individualistic society expects each person or family to manage care on their own.

I was therefore intrigued by the story of Linda Szypula, whose husband Jim has Lewy body dementia (LBD), and Curry Whisenhunt, a Texan truck driver with LBD who started a podcast to disseminate information about LBD and launched a powerful network of online support groups for people with the disease and their spouses. I was particularly moved by the spouses' support group, where women who were caretaking for their husbands 24/7 were able to laugh, cry, vent, and find sustenance. I was also inspired by the growing friendship between Linda, a New Jersey science teacher, and Carla Preyer, a devout Christian hairdresser from the west coast, whose warm, bawdy humor always made the group laugh.

One of my goals was to immerse audiences deeply into the lives of people affected by Lewy body dementia and to put a name and a face to a disease that is more common than ALS, MS and muscular dystrophy combined yet has a very low visibility even within the medical community. The other was to show the power of community to provide an antidote to isolation and despair, for those with dementia and those caring for them.

I began by filming Linda and Jim's go-for-broke road trip, where they planned to visit National Parks and people in the support group who they had never met in person. I believed that the road trip would form the core of the film and that we could show people

"...no one should attempt to do this alone. We need family and friends, we need community networks, and we need government support."

in very difficult situations living with resilience and joy. The scene we filmed where Jim and Linda run with excitement to meet Curry in person at his doorstep was exactly what I hoped to portray.

However, just weeks into the trip Jim took a turn for the worse. On the West Coast, Carla was excited about Jim and Linda's visit and was planning a ceremony to renew her marriage vows with Patrick, but Patrick suddenly was disoriented and would no longer leave the house.

Our observational camera began focusing on the experiences of these two women struggling with the reality that their husbands were beginning to disappear into dementia. Their profound connection with each other and with their support group took center stage.

The willingness and the courage of the people in the film to allow us to record their lives at such difficult moments was a profound gift—to the filmmakers and to the audience. I believe that sharing these raw experiences can pull audiences deep into the truths of dementia and caregiving and can highlight the message that no one should attempt to do this alone. We need family and friends, we need community networks and we need government support. 30% of caregivers die before the person they are caring for. That's how hard caregiving can be.

Facing the Wind is not an easy film, but it is a love story. It's a love story about women trying to do anything in their power to help their beloved husbands live fully. It's also a love story about a friendship between two women from different coasts that sustains them through their darkest days and helps them emerge whole on the other side.

– Deirdre Fishel, Director, October 2024

What is LBD?

Lewy body dementia (LBD) is the 2nd most common type of progressive dementia after Alzheimer's disease, affecting more than one million people in the United States. This brain disorder leads to problems with thinking, movement, behavior, and mood. People with LBD have abnormal deposits of a protein called alpha-synuclein in the brain, also called Lewy bodies. Because LBD symptoms may closely resemble Alzheimer's disease, it is widely under-diagnosed. Most people with LBD start having symptoms between ages 50 and 85.

What are the Different Types of Lewy body dementia?

LBD is an umbrella term for two related diagnoses:

Dementia with Lewy bodies is accepted as the way to describe patients whose earliest symptoms include a decline in thinking abilities, which is often accompanied by visual hallucinations and a sleep problem called REM sleep behavior disorder. These patients later develop such Parkinson's disease symptoms as tremor, increased muscle tone, slowness of movements, and gait problems.

In Parkinson's disease dementia, movement symptoms start first and are consistent with a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. Later, problems with thinking and changes in mood and behavior develop. However, not everyone with Parkinson's disease will develop dementia.
Each person with LBD is different in terms of which symptoms they have in the beginning. The most common symptoms include problems in thinking, behavior, movement, and sleep. Read more about LBD symptoms.

For a full glossary of terms related to LBD, click here.

Source: UW Medicine Memory & Brain Wellness Center

Facts About LBD

WHO GETS LBD?

Around 5% of people with a diagnosis of dementia are recorded as having LBD, but there is good evidence that the condition is under-diagnosed. Scientists think LBD may account for up to 20% of all dementia. LBD affects men and women roughly equally. As with most other types of dementia, LBD becomes increasingly common over the age of 65. It can also affect people younger than this.

There is not much evidence that anything we might be exposed to during our lives increases the risk of LBD. Having a traumatic head injury (or repeated injuries) may increase the risk of developing Parkinson’s disease later in life, but it’s not known whether this also applies to LBD.

Almost all people who develop LBD have a ‘sporadic’ form, which means that the main cause is unknown. Some genes may increase the risk of developing LBD. To find out more about the role that genes play in LBD, see factsheet 405, Genetics of dementia.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

People with LBD frequently act out their dreams and make violent movements when they are sleeping. This is called REM sleep behavior disorder and is often the first indication that someone has LBD, occurring up to 20 years before the onset of dementia.

LBD causes a progressive decline in thinking abilities that may seem similar to Alzheimer's disease. However, memory loss with LBD is not as drastic as with Alzheimer’s disease and it fluctuates more from day to day.

LBD also causes symptoms with movement, visual hallucinations, changes in alertness and attention. The movement symptoms may include Parkinson's disease-like symptoms such as difficulties walking, rigid muscles, slow movement and tremors.

Behavioral and mood symptoms, including depression, apathy, anxiety, agitation, delusions or paranoia are also typical, as are changes with body functions, such as blood pressure control, temperature regulation, and bladder/bowel function.

Sources: Massachusetts Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center, Alzheimer’s Society

MADRC

Alzheimer’s Society

Facts About Caregivers

1. More than 1 in 5 Americans (21.3%) are caregivers for an adult or child with special needs. This brings the total number of caregivers in the United States to 53 million, which is up from 43.5 million in 2015.

- *Nearly one in five (19%) are unpaid caregivers to an adult who has functional or health needs.*
- *Nearly a quarter (24%) provide care for more than one person.*
- *More than a quarter (26%) provide care for an individual with Alzheimer's disease or dementia.*
- *Family caregivers are from all different generations.*

2. The unpaid care provided by family caregivers is estimated to value $600B.

The $600B estimate is considered to be on the conservative side, as it only calculates hours of caregiving performed and does not account for family caregivers' out-of-pocket expenses or lost wages associated with their role.

3. Nearly two-thirds (61%) of family caregivers work either full-time or part-time and many also care for children.

These caregivers have been found to experience higher levels of financial and emotional strain compared to other family caregivers.

4. With increasing demand from America's aging Baby Boomer population, there's a shortage of direct care workers.

5. Caregiving takes a physical, emotional, and psychological toll on the care provider.

The level of sacrifice by caregivers should not be underestimated. Caring for an ill, injured, or disabled loved one takes a lot of time and energy, and it can cause a great deal of hardship for the caregiver.

Family caregivers are known to experience challenges such as:

- *Financial and career challenges like lost income, reduced career opportunities, and lowered Social Security and retirement benefits from having to work less.*
- *Loss of personal freedom – 45% of family caregivers say they spend less time engaging in hobbies, and 39% say they see friends less.*
- *Mental health challenges – 49% of family caregivers say their mental health has suffered.*
- *Other health challenges – 34% of caregivers say they are struggling to prioritize their own health.*

Source: West Coast University

Research & Resources

SUPPORT

Lewy Body Dementia Resource Center
The only live national Helpline for LBD in the U.S. 365 days a year:
516-218-2026 or 833-LBD-LINE
Local and national support groups, information in seven languages, a vast number of resources including LBD neurologists and geriatricians.

Alzheimer's Association
800 -272 -3900 (24/7 Hotline)
Working to end all dementias by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support.

CaringKind
646-744-2900
Helpline for all dementias, an extensive network of support groups and education programs, and a wanderer's safety program.

Lewy Body Dementia Association
800-539-9767
Helpline, support groups, education, and research nationwide.

National Institute on Aging
800-438-4380
NIA offers a free publication called Lewy Body Dementia: Information for Patients, Families, and Professionals, Pub #23-AG-7907

PODCASTS

Lewy Body Roller Coaster Podcast
Hear about the ups and downs and twists and turns of Lewy body dementia from Lewy body patients and their families.

Lewy Body Life
This podcast was created to help care partners, family and friends understand and navigate the often complex and unpredictable Lewy body dementia (LBD) journey.

Research & Resources

LBD IN THE NEWS

What Robin Williams' widow wants you to know about the future of Lewy body dementia
CNN HEALTH

A Mother's Legacy: Woman moves to Nebraska to care for mom diagnosed with Lewy body dementia
1011 NOW

Music bridges love and memory for couple facing dementia in Schenectady
CBS 6 ALBANY

In 'I Didn't See It Coming' Author Mary Lou Falcone Documents Her Husband's Battle With Lewy body dementia
27 EAST

Caregiver Distress: The Hidden Burden Of Dementia With Lewy Bodies — And Why Measuring It Matters
CLINICAL LEADER

PRESS FOR FACING THE WIND

Robin Williams Had Lewy Body Dementia — Now, a New Documentary Explores Its Heartbreaking Impact on Caretakers
PEOPLE

Documentary Faces the Reality of Lewy body dementia
NEXT AVENUE

Review: 'Facing the Wind' (2024)
CULTURE MIX

UNSEEN FILMS Facing the Wind
UNSEEN FILMS

Making of FACING THE WIND: Lewy body dementia Film Documentary
THE DR WARD BOND SHOW