Not Dead Yet Applauds PBS Documentary “Lives Worth Living”

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Rochester, NY (PRWEB) October 28, 2011 -- Not Dead Yet, a national disability organization that opposes legalization of assisted suicide, applauds the documentary “Lives Worth Living” which begins airing October 27 on PBS. Produced and directed by Eric Neudel, “Lives Worth Living” combines rare historical footage with interviews of individuals with disabilities who led the development of the disability rights movement.

The documentary features compelling personal reflections by Fred Fay, one of the earliest leaders who passed away this year, and operated for years from a motorized gurney that he drove around his home. “Fred Fay was at the center of the earliest and largest disability rights email network in the country,” observed Diane Coleman, President and CEO of Not Dead Yet. “The Justice For All listserv was the best source of information for people in the disability rights movement in the 1990’s, and Not Dead Yet was grateful to Fred for the opportunity he provided for us to communicate press releases and action alerts to thousands of disability activists.”

Several of the other disability rights movement leaders interviewed in the documentary have worked closely with Not Dead Yet as well. Among these is Bob Kafka, a national leader of the direct action group ADAPT which conducted many of the marches and protests documented in historical footage. Kafka suggested the name “Not Dead Yet” for the group based on a running gag in the movie “Monty Python and the Holy Grail.”

Also interviewed was Marca Bristo who chaired the presidentially appointed National Council on Disability (NCD) during the Clinton Administration. She arranged a debate before the Council members between Coleman and Derek Humphry, co-founder of the Hemlock Society, resulting in a formal NCD position statement opposing legalization of assisted suicide issued in 1997. NCD was later chaired by Lex Frieden during the second Bush Administration. Frieden requested that Coleman provide a cover memorandum when NCD reissued the position paper against assisted suicide in 2005.

“It’s an honor to have been mentored by a number of the powerful leaders who tell the story of our movement in this groundbreaking documentary,” Coleman said. “A lot of people question how a group like ours that claims to be about disability rights can oppose assisted suicide, something generally viewed as a progressive social cause. Perhaps after viewing Lives Worth Living, which challenges the prevailing fear that severe disability is a fate worse than death, it will be easier to understand. We’re really just talking about being equal under the law, and a streamlined path to death is not equal treatment.”

For more information, see a PBS press release about Lives Worth Living as well as video clips from the documentary.

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