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A KUED DOCUMENTARY AND WEBSITE ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH IN UTAH

October 27, 2010 by JoLynne Lyon

On the Edge: Mental Health in Utah airs tonight (that's Wednesday, October 27 At 7:00 p.m.) on KUED. Produced and directed by KUED's Nancy Green and Sally Shaum, the one-hour documentary is the story of people diagnosed with severe mental illness and their struggle in a world that has little to offer in terms of care, support and resources.

Immediately following the program, KUED will air a half-hour call-in segment, Back from the Edge, hosted by KUED's Ken Verdoia. The program will extend the discussion with a panel of guest experts, including Sherri Wittwer, executive director of National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Utah.

The station's website continues the discussion, offering a "watch online" option. KUED's On the Edge webpage also directs visitors to information on mental illness, services that are available and tips for families struggling with this issue.

Here are some excerpts from the webpage about the film:

An estimated 230,000 Utahns are in need of care yet are not receiving services. State and federal budget cuts threaten to cripple an already overburdened system. As our healthcare system fails, it's often left to the criminal justice system to take up the slack. Many people with serious mental illness will face criminal charges and jail time, often for minor disturbances.

"Among the troubling statistics cited is that the largest mental health institution in the U.S. today is the Los Angeles County Jail. "Jails are becoming the 'de facto' providers of mental health services across the country, ironically at a great cost to the public," says KUED's Nancy Green. "It costs ten times more to provide treatment for a seriously mentally ill inmate than it does to treat them in the community."