

FACT SHEET

Portraits of Professional CAREgivers. Their Passion. Their Pain.

THE FILM

This full feature documentary film deals with those who heal the injured and assist the traumatized - social workers, clinical therapists, emergency nurses and doctors, hospice staff, first responders, firefighters, police and other related trauma personnel - but receive little help in managing their own emotional pain and exhaustion, and frequently experience secondary trauma, and at times dramatically higher rates of addiction, suicide, and PTSD.

SUMMARY

Through dramatic personal stories, *Portraits of Professional CAREgivers* probes the emotionally risky aspects of professional care providers. We ask the question: How is the care provider affected emotionally and physically, and who helps our helpers? Through the poignant stories of the professionals, the audience will discover that engaged empathic caregiving can be a significant occupational hazard; we explore the painful and human sides of these professions and the professionals' response to trauma known as *Compassion Fatigue* or *Secondary Traumatic Stress*. We also recognize the profound meaning caregivers may experience in their high risk work and how some progressive agencies are beginning to develop essential structures for staff support.

WEB AND TRAILER

- <http://caregiversfilm.com>
- <https://www.facebook.com/CaregiversFilm/>

PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR—VIC COMPHER

Vic Compher is a film producer *and* social worker who has seen first-hand how “caring too much” can manifest in the emotional suffering of professional caregivers. “Empathy can indeed be an occupational hazard,” he states, “We hope, however, to bring public attention to these issues in the film, and to work with professional organizations to broaden their knowledge and to help them organize programs of support for professional caregivers.”

PRODUCER AND COMPOSER—RODNEY WHITTENBERG

Rodney Whittenberg of Plymouth Meeting is an Emmy award winning musical composer and performer, and a highly recognized producer of music and film through his company, Melodyvision. <http://www.melodyvision.com>

THE WORKSHOP: PREVENTING AND HEALING SECONDARY TRAUMA WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

Because of professional caregivers' frequent, dramatic exposures to their clients'/ patients' emotional or physical traumas *or deaths*, secondary trauma (aka compassion fatigue or vicarious trauma) often occurs. Grief, self-blame, and lack of organizational or community support can intensify symptoms and problems on the job. This supportive workshop assists professional caregivers, *including* supervisors and administrators, to recognize and to address symptoms of secondary trauma. Workshop participants learn ways to enhance self-care and to create structures of peer and organizational support that are appropriate to the culture of the agency. NOTE: This workshop, offered by Vic Compher, is adapted to the host organization's particular context and needs and can be offered for one or two days.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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A film about the emotional impact on professionals who care for others.

BIOS AND BACKGROUND

VIC COMPHER, PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR

Vic began his “encore career” in filmmaking about 12 years ago and *CAREgivers* is his fourth project. His other films include: “Treasures of the Elders,” “Peace of the Elders,” and “I Cannot be Silent”. www.icannotbesilent.com All of his documentaries are story-driven, dramatic, personal accounts of real people’s lives. The three previous films addressed progressive and creative aging, war and peacemaking, and intergenerational sharing and legacies

Vic is also a clinical social worker and educator who has worked in child and family services, geriatric counseling, and hospice services in Philadelphia for over 30 years. In a variety of organizational settings, Vic has discovered and witnessed firsthand the “passion and the pain” which dedicated, empathic, professional caregivers experience daily.

For 15 years he has conducted workshops that have proven to be very helpful for these professional caregivers. Indeed this documentary has evolved out of one of the most popular of these workshops called, “When Trauma or Death Occurs on the Caseload—Ways of Supporting Staff and Promoting Learning.” www.caregiversfilm.com/workshop

Vic’s exploration of the subject of secondary trauma has made it increasingly clear that society in general has many unrealistic expectations of its professional caregivers or public servants—indeed a profound lack of awareness and knowledge about the human side of providing professional care. These, then, are the essential caregivers society calls upon in times of crises: our hotline and child protective social workers, our first responders, firefighters, police, emergency doctors and nurses, psychologists, and hospice staff, among others!

It is this cultural blind spot which inspires Vic to bring attention to this area by producing a documentary for both the public and the helpers alike, a film aptly titled, *“Portraits of Professional Caregivers: Their Passion. Their Pain.”*

RODNEY WHITTENBERG, PRODUCER AND COMPOSER

Rodney Whittenberg’s varied and rich background includes a depth of experience in musical composition, recording, sound-mix and the scoring of films. He is also an experienced videographer and film editor, owns and manages his own production studio, Melodyvision, and he is a sought after teacher of filmmaking at a number of Philadelphia colleges.

Rodney has been involved in the Philadelphia music and filmmaking realm for more than 20 years. He has worked on numerous projects involving real life situations and personal issues. More info at www.melodyvision.com

THE STORYTELLERS

The individuals highlighted in the film are the real stars of the film. Each storyteller tells about his or her exposure to the traumas of their patients or clients, and the effects on their own life. What is it like to be child protective worker, working with young children who have been severely battered or who may die from abuse? Or to be a neonatal nurse working with premature babies who may not survive? Or a psychologist who experiences the suicide of a patient whom he has been trying desperately to help overcome wartime PTSD? Or a first responder who tries unsuccessfully to rescue a drowning child? Or a hospice worker who experiences multiple patient deaths in a matter of days? How are these passionate, professional caregivers personally affected as they open their hearts to others’ tragedies day in and day out, month after month, year after year? How much caring is enough? Who, if anyone, helps the helpers?

For some professional caregivers, it is a catharsis to share their stories; for others, it is a necessity, and for others, it is the only way they can begin to heal. Their personal stories are moving, painful, and true. Through their stories, our own hearts are stirred and our own grief is often healed.

FUNDING FOR FILM PROJECT

Funding for this project has been made possible through the PA Council of the Arts/ Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, PECO, the CHG Charitable Trust, the Scattergood Foundation, and the generosity of many private contributors.

A film about the emotional impact on professionals who care for others.

CAREGIVERS FILM IN THE MEDIA

UNIVERSITY OF BUFFALO SOCIAL WORK INTERVIEW - POSTED JUNE 6, 2016

<http://www.insocialwork.org/episode.asp?ep=193>

RADIO TIMES INTERVIEW WITH VIC COMPHER AND SANDRA BLOOM OF SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

<http://whyy.org/cms/radiotimes/2015/09/23/caring-for-caregivers/>

Photo taken after Radio Times broadcast:

<https://www.facebook.com/WHYYradiotimes/photos/a.252984542003.179398.240373527003/10154178461347004/?type=3&theater>

WHYY'S NEWSWORKS INTERVIEW WITH RODNEY WHITTENBERG:

<http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/speak-easy/item/82613-doc-from-pa-filmmaker-gives-voice-to-trauma-of-first-responders>

FILM REVIEW OF CAREGIVERS FILM SEPT. 9, 2015:

<http://www.acesconnection.com/blog/who-helps-our-helpers-portraits-of-professional-caregivers-documents-in-film-their-passion-and-pain>

ARTICLE ABOUT VIC COMPHER AND FILM REVIEW OF SEPT. 17, 2015

<https://acestoohigh.com/2015/09/17/who-helps-our-helpers-vic-comphers-portraits-of-professional-caregivers-documents-their-passion-pain/>

ARTICLE ABOUT CAREGIVERS FILM IN NASW BLOG APRIL 23, 2015

<http://www.socialworkersspeak.org/hollywood-connection/caregivers-documentary-coming-to-theaters.html>

“BOOMER GENERATION” RADIO INTERVIEW WITH VIC COMPHER, April 13, 2013

<http://www.jewishshadedaging.com/social-worker-film-maker-vic-compher-visits-boomer-generation-radio/>

NASW ARTICLE IN NEWSLETTER ABOUT SECONDARY TRAUMA AND OUR FILM SPRING 2014

<http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/news/2014/01/compassion-fatigue.asp>

ARTICLE IN "THE GUARDIAN" ABOUT STS BY JOHN WEAVER AND OUR FILM SEPT. 23, 2015

<https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/social-life-blog/2015/sep/23/mental-health-social-worker-secondary-trauma>

COMMUNITY CARE BLOG—UK RELATED ARTICLE AND REFERENCE TO OUR FILM

<http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2015/07/14/social-workers-on-the-edge-of-burnout-but-still-achieving-positive-changes/>

RELATED DOCUMENTARY FILMS

- [Crisis Hotline—Veterans Press 1](#) (by Ellen Goosenberg Kent 2015 Oscar for best short documentary)
- [Code 9 Officer in Need of Assistance](#) (by Deborah Ortiz)
- [Paper Tigers](#) (by Jamie Redford)
- [Resilience](#) (by Jamie Redford)
- [Pull of Gravity](#) (by El Sawyer)

AUDIENCE QUOTES

After viewing “Portraits of Professional CAREgivers,” I was overwhelmed with an emotional awareness that I had been taking on the pain of my students, without acknowledging the pain that I was experiencing so deeply in my soul.”

– *Jim Sporleder, high school principal featured in documentary Paper Tigers* (www.papertigersmovie.com)

“I was speaking yesterday to a group and greeted everyone by saying ‘Hello Beloved Community’ because that is what I feel about the folks you interviewed in CAREgivers film. I feel very grateful to you and all of your team for making this documentary...” *Sandra Bloom, MD, Associate Professor, School of Public Health, Drexel University*

“The CAREGIVERS film has provided our organization with a powerful tool to support staff members impacted by secondary trauma. We have used this film with our employees to both help them understand the impact secondary trauma has on them personally as well as to help them feel less alone as they serve people exposed to trauma. “

Stephanie Shell, Director of Organizational Advancement, Wordsworth, Philadelphia, PA

“ I think when caregivers do not have the support and guidance they need they are not able to be available to their patients in a helpful way...I recognize a deep truth that resonated after seeing CAREGIVERS....thank you very much for the contribution you are making.” *Christina H. Robertson, Ph.D.*

“I firmly applaud this film. But more so, I am grateful that the team that produced it was able to so vividly show the challenges undertaken by those who have committed their lives to helping others—and the empathy-transmitted pain many experience in the course of doing so...Other than preventing trauma—to which we caregivers need to commit ourselves—the next best we can do is to be there for those who so humanly need rescuing, caregiving, and help toward healing back to good health.”

Henri Parens, MD

“Our journey of caring for the vulnerable people in our communities needs to include gratitude for professional caregivers as demonstrated by how we care for them on *their* journey, as well.” – *Brian M. Duke (former) PA Secretary of Aging*

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“I especially like the way the film captures the common elements of ongoing exposure to stress and trauma across practice sites and professional disciplines, including police and fire/rescue with medicine, psychology, social work, nursing, education, and hospice care. The graphics were a wonderful way to amplify yet soften tough subject matter. The variety of lessons learned should stimulate reflection and conversation in every viewer.” – *John Weaver, LCSW, Therapist and Red Cross Trainer*

“A powerful and poignant film that touches on a subject that is frequently ignored. The film covers so many aspects of secondary trauma in a meaningful and poignant way. It also offers hope.” – *Donald M. Friedman, M.D.*

“An incredibly important and moving film. Anyone who works as a caregiver, service provider, or helper must watch this film.” – *Meghan, Child Advocate*

“...wonderful, powerful, haunting, honest, TRUE...” – *Lara Krawchuk, MSW, LCSW, MPH, Professor and Trainer*

“This was an outstanding and beautiful film. Thank you for making it. I did not realize how much it would affect me, particularly how little I think about my own experience of this work.” – *Heather Tuckman, PsyD, Professor*

“Emotionally it is valuable to feel camaraderie for so many helping professionals (shown in the film) and how honored this work makes one feel.” – *Bernice, Child Welfare Social Worker/Administrator*

“I felt recognized and validated by the film as it depicted the pressures and stress that healthcare professionals deal with on a regular basis.” – *Lisbel, Healthcare Professional*

AUDIENCE QUOTES

“This film really showed the importance of self care (for professionals.) It was deep, and definitely an eye opener...I laughed and I cried. Great film!” – *Shea, Care Provider*

“The film was extremely touching and emotional for me. It pointed out for me the prevalence of trauma, and the importance of self-care in order to be of help to someone else.” – *Anonymous*

“...This film gave me an open heart toward police officers. The film was heartfelt, insightful and much needed...(it) also opened my eyes that firefighters and police officers are also caregivers.” – *T. Wilson*

“As a family caregiver, the film validated so much of the pain and wisdom I’ve felt and gained--that, and learning names for some of what I feel, was so very helpful. Thank you.” – *Roberta, Family Caregiver (non-professional)*

“A welcome addition to the relatively few public debriefing opportunities for traumas associated with helping those in real trouble.” – *Anonymous*

“I feel equal parts vindicated and understood. Thank you for this sensitive and comprehensive exploration.”
– *Laura Hinds, MSW, LCSW*

“Very important to show common (ground) experienced among many kinds of caregivers. Really important to show what organizations can/should do to support staff.” – *Anonymous*

