



news release

Contact: Diane Steinert, Communications Coordinator
330-677-4549 or dsteinert@WesternReservePublicMedia.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A Closer Look: Mitochondrial Disease to premiere on Western Reserve PBS

*New program offers helpful information about
an often misdiagnosed disease*

Kent, Ohio — Sept. 3, 2014 — The poignant stories of two Ohio families are the foundation of a new Western Reserve Public Media production that offers important information about mitochondrial disease. **A Closer Look: Mitochondrial Disease** will premiere on Wednesday, Sept. 10, at 8 p.m. on Western Reserve PBS (WNEO 45.1 / WEAO 49.1). Additional airdates and times can be found at <http://westernreservepublicmedia.org>.

Mitochondrial disease is a debilitating and often fatal condition that results from failure of the body's mitochondria, which are the cell's power producers. When mitochondria fail, cell injury and even cell death can occur, which can lead to the failure of whole body systems. Each year, 1,000 to 4,000 children in the United States are born with the disease. Exact numbers of children — and adults — who are suffering from the disease are hard to determine because it is often misdiagnosed. However, experts say the frequency of mitochondrial disease in the United States is approaching that of childhood cancers.

A Closer Look: Mitochondrial Disease offers background information about the disease and shares the stories of the Lyman family of Northeast Ohio and the Strawser family of Southwest Ohio. Both families have daughters who died from the disease. "Working with the Lyman and Strawser families was an emotional roller coaster for all of us who were involved with this production," said Toni Kayumi, Western Reserve Public Media chief development and communications officer. "In the face of great loss, the families opened their homes and hearts to us. It shows how strongly they believe in the importance of educating the public about mitochondrial disease."

-more-



The production also offers discussion with medical professionals from Akron Children’s Hospital. Dr. Bruce Cohen, director of pediatric neurology, specializes in researching and treating mitochondrial disease. Dr. Sarah Friebert, director of pediatric palliative care, talks about the importance of a team approach in meeting the needs of both patient and family.

“Mitochondrial disease affects the entire family, and families benefit from holistic, interdisciplinary palliative care to help ease the physical, psychosocial, emotional, spiritual and practical suffering that can accompany this multidimensional illness,” Dr. Friebert explained. “In addition to raising awareness about the disease itself, we want people to know that help is available.”

Western Reserve Public Media chose to premiere this program in September, which has been designated Mitochondrial Disease Awareness Month in Ohio. In June, Gov. John Kasich signed Senate Bill 300, also known as the Corynna Strawser Act, in honor of the teen’s hope to raise awareness of mitochondrial disease.

Funding for **A Closer Look: Mitochondrial Disease** was provided by Akron Children’s Hospital, Northeast Ohio Medical University and the United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation. This production is the second in a series devoted to educating both health care professionals and the general public about pediatric palliative care. It is a partnership among Akron Children’s Hospital, Northeast Ohio Medical University and Western Reserve Public Media.

For more information about this production or about Western Reserve Public Media, call 1-800-554-4549 or visit <http://westernreservepublicmedia.org>.

About Western Reserve Public Media

Western Reserve Public Media (formerly PBS 45 & 49) is owned and operated by Northeastern Educational Television of Ohio, Inc., a private, nonprofit corporation and consortium of Kent State University, The University of Akron and Youngstown State University. A trusted community resource, Western Reserve Public Media uses the power of commercial-free television and related services to enrich the lives of people through high-quality programming and educational services that teach, illuminate and inspire. It serves the largest population of Ohio’s eight PBS member stations.

Western Reserve PBS (WNEO 45.1/WEAO 49.1), a service of the organization, is the only broadcast television service that reaches all of Northeast Ohio. It is available to 5.13 million people in the Cleveland and Youngstown designated market areas. In an average month, more than 1 million people tune in. The organization also operates three standard definition channels: Fusion (WNEO 45.2/WEAO 49.2), MHz Worldview (WNEO 45.3/WEAO 49.3) and V-me (WNEO 45.4/WEAO 49.4).

Through funding from the Ohio Department of Education, Western Reserve Public Media provides K-12 educational technology training and instructional television programming to 21,500 educators and 256,700 students in 10 Ohio

counties. For more information about the organization, visit <http://www.WesternReservePublicMedia.org> or call 1-800-554-4549.

About Akron Children's Hospital

Akron Children's Hospital is one of the largest pediatric hospitals in the United States, and ranked among the best children's hospitals by U.S. News and World Report. Its dedicated staff handles nearly 800,000 patient visits each year through two hospital campuses and a large network of locations offering primary and specialty care. The hospital is leading the way to healthier futures for children and communities through expert medical care, research, and prevention and wellness programs. As a teaching affiliate of Northeast Ohio Medical University and other universities, Akron Children's Hospital trains new generations of pediatricians, specialists and nurses every year. For more information, visit <http://akronchildrens.org>.

About Northeast Ohio Medical University

Northeast Ohio Medical University is a public, community-based medical university and academic health center with a mission to improve the health and economy of Northeast Ohio. For 40 years, NEOMED has worked in collaboration with its educational, clinical and research partners to successfully train health professionals and medical researchers who serve and impact the region and beyond. The University trains students in a team-based, interprofessional environment and offers doctor of medicine (M.D.) and doctor of pharmacy (Pharm.D.) degrees, in addition to master's and doctoral degrees and research opportunities in other medical areas. Still burning bright after 40 years; visit <http://www.neomed.edu/40>.

About United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation

The UMDF was founded in 1996 through a merger of several smaller foundations established by those who lost loved ones to the disease. Starting as a volunteer organization based in the basement of a home, the UMDF has grown into a nationally recognized nonprofit organization.

The UMDF offers support to all sufferers of mitochondrial disorders regardless of diagnosis, suspected or confirmed. Its mission is to promote research and education for the diagnosis, treatment and cure of mitochondrial disorders and to provide support to affected individuals and families.

The UMDF is represented across the nation through volunteers who operate more than 50 local chapters, groups and ambassador programs.

For more information, visit <http://www.umdf.org>.

##