

APTS to Recognize Vermont Public Television for an Innovative and Groundbreaking Campaign to Promote Awareness of Mental Illness

WASHINGTON— February 23, 2010 — The Association of Public Television Stations (APTS) will recognize Vermont Public Television with a 2010 EDGE Award to for demonstrating the great potential of digital television. The EDGE Awards are presented annually to public television stations that use digital technology, groundbreaking partnerships, and educational technologies to deliver innovative services to their communities.

“This year our EDGE Award recipients have a common theme—they use their broadcast and other resources to draw upon the energy and engagement around some of the most pressing issues affecting our country—jobs, education and health care,” said Larry Sidman, President and CEO of APTS. “These projects show that stations are moving beyond traditional broadcast and are engaging their communities in new and innovative ways. Audiences are reached through over-the-air, online, and on-the-ground partnerships, impacting their communities in ways that really set them apart.”

Sidman said: “Vermont Public Television teamed up with the University of Vermont College of Medicine, Vermont Law School and the Vermont office of the National Alliance on Mental Illness to carry out a multi-faceted, multi-platform, month-long community engagement campaign that brought together national and local television broadcast components, in tandem with Web-based and community forums to create open discussion about the challenges, solutions and impact of mental illness on Vermont communities.”

“This award is especially meaningful, because it recognizes the importance of all three platforms of the project—over-the-air, online and on-the-ground—in raising awareness of and decreasing the stigma attached to mental illness,” said project head Elizabeth Ottinger, Director of Community Outreach at Vermont Public Television.

Specifically, the October 2009 campaign augmented the national broadcast of the Fred Friendly Seminar *Minds on the Edge: Facing Mental Illness* with a day-long legislative event at the Vermont Law School for legislators, and five town hall screenings that brought together legislators and community leaders to form action plans to advance various strategies to promote a greater awareness and understanding of mental illness in Vermont. Oliver Goodenough, professor at Vermont Law School and a Co-Director of the MacArthur Education and Outreach Program, expressed gratitude for the EDGE Award to the *Minds on the Edge* project. “Mental health issues are at the heart of many of our most difficult challenges in law,” he said. “We were pleased to be able to be a part of this important initiative and to help our legislature grapple with these thorny problems.”

“Vermont Public Television’s month-long campaign has had an exceptional impact across the state, but it also has had a profound impact outside the state,” said Richard Kilberg, President of Fred Friendly Seminars. “We have presented *Minds on the Edge* to mental health professionals, citizen groups and policymakers at conferences across the country throughout this past fall and

winter, and we have repeatedly held up Vermont as the model of how to use a public media project to move public dialogue. The story of their success has inspired stakeholders in numerous other states to bring key constituencies together around this public media program and work together to transform a badly broken mental health system.”

“We are proud of the role Dr. Thomas Simpatico, our Director of Public Psychiatry, played in helping educate the public about mental health and the legal system in both the national *Minds on the Edge* program, as well as in Vermont Public Television’s statewide town meetings and “Public Square” program,” said Frederick C. Morin III, M.D., Dean of the University of Vermont College of Medicine. “Dr. Simpatico has been an advocate in our state to bring attention to this issue, facilitating dialogue with all stakeholders to ensure patients and their families can navigate the system to get the care they need.”

Connie Stabler, President of the Board, National Alliance on Mental Illness-VT, said, “NAMI-VT is honored to have partnered with Vermont Public Television as a participant in the *Minds on the Edge* Project. Following the public screenings, community leaders, legislators and others joined families, friends and individuals living with mental illness in town-hall style meetings around the state for continued dialogue on improving treatment options. In our state where one in five people are affected by serious mental illness, this program provided a public service in educating the public and reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness.”

In 1980, America’s public television stations created the Association of Public Television Stations (APTS) as their premier advocate. For the past thirty years, APTS has been the voice of the public television station community – offering member stations and future leaders of public television unparalleled opportunities for impact. Find out more at www.pts.org.

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