FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MOTHER & DAUGHTER’S STRUGGLE WITH THE RAVAGES OF MENTAL ILLNESS
Award-Winning Film Offers Hope & Healing to Millions of American Families

Out of the Shadow, Susan Smiley’s award-winning documentary which offers a searing yet captivating real-life portrait of her mother Millie’s lifelong struggle with paranoid schizophrenia and its shattering impact on her family, will be re-broadcast on major market public television stations beginning during Mental Illness Awareness Week, October 1st – 8th 2006. (Check local listings for dates and times)

Established in 1990 by Congress, the first week of October is designated as “Mental Illness Awareness Week” to raise mental illness awareness and to encourage further understanding and promote early intervention and treatment. (See www.nami.org click on Take Action for info).

Out of the Shadow has already generated thousands of heart-felt and poignant e-mails from individuals whose families have been touched by mental illness thanking Susan Smiley “for being an angel of awareness, compassion and healing.” (See attached for sample e-mails.)

We’ve all seen these people, destitute, delusional, muttering to themselves. For the most part we just walk away and keep going. But every time I pass one of these people I think, ‘that could be my mother.’

With these haunting words Susan Smiley begins her provocative and revealing new film – a powerful and poignant story of madness and dignity, shame and love. Hers was the picture perfect suburban family next door – a Grace Kelly look-alike mom with two smiling young daughters. But hidden beneath the surface was a dark and terrifying secret. Her mother was descending into her own world filled with paranoia, rage, strange voices and outbursts of violence.

Millie Smiley’s harrowing odyssey through schizophrenia included multiple suicide attempts and abuse as she made her way through 17 psych wards, 8 apartments, 3 boarding houses and countless motels as well as periods of homelessness. As a ward of the state she frequently lost all contact with her family. Determined to get better care for their mother, Smiley and her sister Tina eventually become Millie’s legal guardians - ultimately leading to recovery and healing for Millie and her family.

Filmed over five years, Out of the Shadow uncovers one family’s struggle, but reveals a national plight. One percent of the world’s population suffers from schizophrenia.

Three million Americans and their families are ravaged not only by the disease but by the stigma, barriers to treatment and a broken and fragmented mental health service delivery system.
“This film was born out of my anger about the stigma and vast code of silence surrounding people with schizophrenia and their families,” said filmmaker Susan Smiley. “My frustration with the system and my confusion about my mom’s illness fueled my need to tell this story.” *Out of the Shadow* illustrates the complexities of severe mental illness on individuals and their families and exposes the inadequacies of the American public mental health system.

“Schizophrenia affects families like mine and yours – not only the nameless homeless person on the street,” says filmmaker Smiley. “I want the film to impart the message that schizophrenia can be effectively managed when patients receive comprehensive psychosocial services, including safe and stable housing, family support and open access to proper treatment.”

*Out of the Shadow* is an emotional journey in which filmmaker Smiley explores a difficult, painful past in order to cross over to a more hopeful future. The film weaves probing interviews, home movie footage and family photos with recent candid footage to unravel this complex story.

**About Susan Smiley**
An award-winning documentary filmmaker, Susan Smiley is the producer, director and writer of *Out of the Shadow*, her first independently produced feature documentary. Susan has produced and directed documentaries for Discovery Channel, History Channel, Sci-Fi Channel, MTV and the Frontline series on PBS. In addition to the extensive public speaking and outreach Susan is now doing with *Out of the Shadow*, she is in production on her next film which explores the criminalization of mentally ill youth in Los Angeles County.

More information and a film clip can be found at [www.outoftheshadow.com](http://www.outoftheshadow.com).

Photos for *Out of the Shadow* are available online at [http://pressroom.opb.org/programs/shadow](http://pressroom.opb.org/programs/shadow).

More information about Schizophrenia is available at [www.schizophrenia.com/family/sz.overview.htm](http://www.schizophrenia.com/family/sz.overview.htm).

Funding has been provided in part by the David C. and Lura M. Lovell Foundation, Aetna, Pfizer, Janssen L.P and Zellerbach Family Foundation.

**Credits:**
- Directed, Produced and Photographed by Susan Smiley.
- Editors: Joel Plotch, Jonathan Oppenheim.
- Co-Producer: Elizabeth Massie.
- Composers: Hector H. Perez, B. Quincy Griffin.

**About Vine Street Pictures** – Vine Street Pictures is a Los Angeles based boutique production company focused on producing documentaries about social issues in need of attention.
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Mental Health Backgrounder

Schizophrenia is a chronic, severe, and disabling brain disease affecting men and women with equal frequency. People with schizophrenia often suffer terrifying symptoms such as hearing internal voices not heard by others, or believing that other people are reading their minds, controlling their thoughts, or plotting to harm them. Their speech and behavior can be so disorganized that they may be incomprehensible or frightening to others. Available treatments can relieve many symptoms, but most people with schizophrenia continue to suffer some symptoms throughout their lives.

Out of the Shadow is having a tremendous impact on mental health communities nationwide and is being hailed for raising public awareness and educating policy makers about the realities, issues and needs of America’s mentally ill population.

Senator Edward Kennedy has described reforming America’s fragmented and often-dysfunctional mental health system as, “the next great frontier.”

Every year 44 million Americans over the age of 18 (22%) are affected by a mental health condition, more than the number affected by cancer or diabetes. Twenty percent of children also experience a mental health issue. Tragically, one of every two Americans who need mental health treatment do not receive it, and the rate is even lower — and the quality of care poorer — for ethnic and racial minorities.

In July 2003 the President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health released its groundbreaking report entitled Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America. The Commission found the U. S mental health system “in disarray, leading to unnecessary and costly disability, homelessness, school failure and incarceration.” The Commission called for a "fundamental transformation of the Nation's approach to mental health care."

According to the Campaign for Mental Health Reform since the release of the Commission's report 87,000 additional Americans have died by suicide; more than 275,000 Americans with mental illnesses have been incarcerated; more than 35,000 families have given up custody of their children in order to get mental health services; juvenile detention centers have spent $275 million 'warehousing' youth in juvenile justice facilities instead of providing treatment; and the American economy has lost more than $ 205 billion in productivity due to unaddressed mental health needs.

In February 2006 Congress passed and President Bush signed the ‘Deficit Reduction Act’ including cuts to Medicaid reducing mental health services that are the core elements of the public mental health system in every state. In addition, mental health patients, including those
with incomes below the poverty level, will be required to assume a greater share of the costs of medications. The President’s new 2007 Budget proposes further cuts and cost increases.