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For downloadable images, visit pbs.org/pressroom

For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/mine

**MINE,
THE POWERFUL STORY
OF THE BOND BETWEEN HUMANS AND ANIMALS,
PREMIERES TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16 AT 10PM
ON THE PBS SERIES INDEPENDENT LENS**

They Survived Katrina. But Can They Find Each Other?

(San Francisco, CA)—**MINE** is the poignant and powerful story of pet owners separated from their animals during Hurricane Katrina, and of their struggles to find and bring their beloved companions home. A meditation on the essential bond between humans and animals, **MINE** is an equally compelling story of race and class, and the power of compassion in contemporary America. Directed by Geralyn Pezanoski, **MINE** premieres on Tuesday, February 16 at 10 p.m. (check local listings) on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Maggie Gyllenhaal.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Louisiana coast in August 2005, no one could fathom the tremendous damage the storm would create. Many who evacuated thought it would blow over quickly, and they would soon return home to resume their lives. But over the following days, millions of Americans watched in disbelief as disturbing images of people trapped on rooftops above the flood waters appeared on television. Thousands more were marooned in the Superdome without food in sweltering heat, while others were relocated to faraway cities, with no idea when they would be allowed to return home — if they had a home to return to.



Scenes from MINE, coming to Independent Lens February 2010.

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Filmmaker GERALYN PEZANOSKI was also watching events unfold, profoundly affected by not only the human catastrophe, but by the suffering of animals separated from their owners. When she heard about rescue efforts being carried out by animal lovers from across the country and the world, she decided to go to New Orleans to document this incredible undertaking.

During the ensuing six weeks she filmed dozens of volunteers and some of the thousands of animals they rescued. She subsequently saw many of these animals loaded onto trucks and planes and sent to shelters across the country, their fates uncertain.

As the weeks went by, an increasing number of residents returned to New Orleans to rebuild their lives. Some returned to homes that were completely destroyed, their pets gone—adopted out to new loving families and given new names. For many who had lost everything, the search for a pet became a desperate attempt to find the one thing left in the world that belonged to them.

Through the stories of the original owners, the foster families and the animal advocates in the film, **MINE** reveals the resilience of the human spirit. From Malvin Cavalier, who had to leave his dog behind when he sought shelter in the Superdome, to Gloria Richardson, who refused to evacuate without her Black Lab, but was then forcibly separated by authorities, the owners in **MINE** refused to give up searching for their companions, and many are reunited with their pets.

Set in a post-Katrina landscape of poverty, loss and moral uncertainty, **MINE** presents the complexity of an intensely emotional situation and raises questions for which there are no simple answers: Why weren't people allowed to evacuate with their animals? Once the rescued animals were adopted into new homes, who had the authority to decide whether they should be returned to their previous owners? Why were original owners running into resistance in their efforts to reclaim their pets?

When two families love the same pet, conflicts inevitably arise over who is the rightful "owner" and what is right for the animal. At the center of this tension are pets that are loved like family, but by law are considered property. The heart of the matter is this: What is in the best interest of the animals and who has the right to decide?

To learn more about the film and its subjects, visit the companion website for **MINE** at pbs.org/mine. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section where viewers can share their ideas and opinions.

Participants

Karen O'Toole has worked for years as a writer and production coordinator in Hollywood. Impassioned by TV images of the disaster, Karen was one of the first rescuers to navigate her way into a submerged city in a race against time to save thousands of animals trapped in houses and fighting to survive. Armed with a crowbar and pure tenacity, Karen embarked on a crusade that will last longer than she could have ever imagined.

Gloria Richardson, 70 years old, refused to evacuate New Orleans without her lab, Murphy Brown, and was forcibly removed after days with no clean water and dwindling food supplies. Gloria and her pet were separated and though he was wearing tags and had paperwork, Murphy Brown got lost in the system and sent out of state.

Malvin Cavalier, 86 years old, was forced to flee to the Superdome, which did not allow animals. He left his beloved companion Bandit with food and water and a promise that he'd return in a few days. Instead, Malvin was evacuated to Houston and spent the next several months wondering if he'd ever get back home to find Bandit. Finally able to return to a FEMA-issued trailer in New Orleans, Malvin searches for his dog with the help of an unlikely new friend, Sandra Bauer, a volunteer from Canada. They discover that Bandit is with a family in Pittsburgh, but the rescue group that placed the dog refuses to provide any additional information. While Sandra works the legal system trying to sue for Bandit's return, Malvin struggles to rebuild his life and his home.

Jessie Pullins is a New Orleans resident and an advocate for the homeless. When Jesse and his family evacuated without their dog, J.J., they never imagined they wouldn't be able to return for months. During his exhaustive search, Jessie discovered J.J. featured on Cesar Millan's *The Dog Whisperer*. On the program, a plea was made for the dog's owners to come forward. Over three years later Jessie continues to search for answers on the whereabouts of his best friend.

Tiffany and Jeremy Mansfield. Jeremy Mansfield found the perfect Christmas present for his wife, Tiffany at the local animal shelter—a Jack Russell terrier rescued after Hurricane Katrina. The Mansfields thought they were doing good by rescuing a “Katrina animal,” only to find themselves in the midst of a custody battle over their beloved pet when his original guardian comes forward to reclaim him.

Randy Turner, an attorney in Texas, is an animal lover who is working pro-bono on behalf of the shelter that rehabilitated and found a new home for Linda Charles' German Shepherd. His clients are being sued based on Louisiana property laws, which consider pets to be property and give original owners three years to reclaim their animals.

About the Filmmaker

Geralyn Pezanoski (Director), Co-Founder of Smush Media, has 12 years of experience in film and video production and makes her feature directorial debut with MINE. Film producing credits include the narrative short, *On A Tuesday* (Santa Barbara & LAIFF) and *Motherland* (SXSW), and directing credits include the doc series *Firehouse* (Sony Pictures Entertainment). While in New Orleans filming MINE, Pezanoski fostered and eventually adopted a ‘Katrina’ dog, a pointer mix she named Nola. She lives in San Francisco with her husband Peter and Nola.

Erin Essenmacher (Producer) is a writer, director and producer with over 10 years of experience in corporate, non-profit and broadcast production with a strong focus on documentary. Credits include a wide range of independent and broadcast documentary projects for PBS, The Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, The History Channel and Court TV. She splits her time between the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® and Peabody Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.