



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ***The Homestretch* Premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, April 13, 2015 on PBS**

**Three Homeless Teens Brave Chicago Winters, the Pressures of High School, and Life on the Streets to Build a Brighter Future**

### ***An American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen Special***

(San Francisco, CA) — ***The Homestretch*** follows three remarkable homeless teens as they fight to stay in school, graduate, and build a more stable future. Each of these smart, resilient teenagers – Roque, Kasey, and Anthony – challenge stereotypes of homelessness as they work to complete their education while coping with the trauma of being alone and abandoned at an early age. Through haunting images, intimate scenes, and first-person narratives, these teens take us on their journeys of struggle and triumph. As their stories unfold, the film explores their plights within the larger issues of poverty, race, juvenile justice, immigration, foster care, and LGBTQ rights.

*The Homestretch* is part of American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen, a public media initiative made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to help local communities across America keep more students on the path to graduation. A co-production of Spargel Productions and Kartemquin Films, directed and produced by Anne de Mare and Kirsten Kelly, *The Homestretch* premieres on *Independent Lens* on Monday, April 13, 2015, 10:00-11:00 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

Across America, the number of homeless youth is growing at a staggering rate – nearly 2.5 million American children were homeless at some point in 2013, leaving school systems throughout the nation struggling to cope with the needs of kids who not only have no homes but often no stable parental or adult support. In an environment of rising unemployment, poverty and home foreclosures, over 19,000 Chicago public school students were registered in the “Students in Temporary Living Situations” Homeless Education Program in the 2012/2013 school year.

With unprecedented access into the Chicago Public Schools, The Night Ministry's *Crib* emergency youth shelter and Teen Living Programs' Belfort House, *The Homestretch* follows



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these teens as they navigate a life of couch-hopping, emergency shelters, transitional homes, street families and a school system on the front lines of this crisis. The film examines the struggles these youth face in obtaining a high school level education, and then follows them beyond graduation to focus on the crucial transition period when the structure of school vanishes and they have to find the support and community they need to survive as an independent adult.

*The Homestretch* is a powerful, original perspective on what it means to be young and homeless while trying to create a better future in America today.

Visit *The Homestretch* companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/homestretch/>) which features information about the film, including an interview with the filmmakers, preview clips, and more.

### About the Subjects

Born and raised on the south side of Chicago, **Kasey** spent over a year bouncing around between friends, family members, and sleeping on the street, ultimately dropping out of high school her senior year. In the film, Kasey is just entering a new transitional home and is re-enrolled in school. Kasey is a poet, a painter, and a tremendous source of support for her huge network of friends.

**Anthony** spent his childhood in foster homes and went out on his own at the age of 14. After years of jumping from school to school and being homeless, he is proud to be self-taught. He recently earned his GED and was accepted into the Year Up Chicago Program where he has an internship in telecommunications. A talented poet, rapper, and entrepreneur, Anthony never stops planning and working for success.

Due to immigration complications **Roque** was forced to separate from his family and fend for himself beginning in his sophomore year of high school. With an unstable family and housing situation, Roque spent several years adrift until one of his teachers introduced him to Shakespeare and acting and he became inspired to finish high school and go to college. With his teacher's support, he hopes to go into theater and psychology and help others through some of the same challenges he has faced.

### About the Filmmakers

**Anne de Mare (Director/Producer)** is an award-winning playwright, director, professional video artist, and filmmaker. She and Spargel Productions partner Kirsten Kelly completed their first documentary feature, *Asparagus! Stalking the American Life*, which broadcast regionally on public television in 2009. Anne's original plays have been presented in Chicago, London, and New York, where she was a five-year resident artist with Richard Foreman's legendary





Ontological-Hysteric Theater. She is a founding member of the Independent Theater Company, the Nevermore Theater Project, and Theaters Against War. Her video work has been seen on stage at Lincoln Center and at the Park Avenue Armory, and she is currently working with Innovative Music Programs to develop the film component of Accidental Heroes, a multi-media performance work based on the lives of eastern and western European artists coming of age during the Cold War.

**Kirsten Kelly (Director/Producer)** is an award-winning documentary film and theater director who lives in Brooklyn, New York. She and filmmaker Anne de Mare founded Spargel Productions in 2002, to make their first feature documentary, *Asparagus! Stalking the American Life*, about Kelly's hometown. The pair is currently in development for *The Girl With the Rivet Gun*, an animated new media documentary project on Rosie the Riveter. Her short film work has been seen at Juilliard and Lincoln Center. A two-time Helen Hayes-nominated Best Director, Kelly has directed award-winning theater productions in Chicago, Washington D.C. and Off-Broadway in New York. She is an arts educator and director and co-creator of CPS Shakespeare, a highly-acclaimed program that works with Chicago public high school students at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater, which was featured on NBC Nightly News in 2010. Kelly is a graduate of Juilliard's Master Directing program, where she received the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship and was a member of Rising Phoenix Repertory in New York.

#### CREDITS

Produced and directed by  
Executive Producers

Anne de Mare and Kirsten Kelly  
Justine Nagan  
Gordon Quinn  
Andrew W. Schwertfeger

Editor  
Written by

Leslie Simmer  
Anne de Mare  
Kirsten Kelly  
Leslie Simmer

Cinematography  
Original Music

Anne De Mare and Kirsten Kelly  
Greg Kalember

#### About *Independent Lens*

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 p.m. The acclaimed series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by Independent Television Service, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more visit [pbs.org/independentlens](http://pbs.org/independentlens). Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).



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### **About American Graduate**

[American Graduate: Let's Make it Happen](#) was launched in 2011 with 25 public media stations in high need communities to spotlight the high school dropout crisis and focus on middle and high school student interventions. Today, more than 100 public radio and television stations in 40 states have partnered with over 1000 community organizations and schools, as well as Alma and Colin Powell's America's Promise Alliance, Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, Alliance for Excellent Education, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Newman's Own Foundation to help the nation achieve a 90% graduation by 2020. With primetime and children's programming that educates, informs, and inspires public radio and television stations — locally owned and operated — are important resources in helping to address critical issues facing today's communities. According to a report from the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, American Graduate stations have told the story about the dropout crisis in a way that empowered citizens to get involved, and helped community organizations break down silos to work more effectively together. Visit American Graduate on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [AmericanGraduate.org](#).

### **About CPB**

The [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#) (CPB), a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1,400 locally-owned and -operated public television and radio stations nationwide, and is the largest single source of funding for research, technology and program development for public radio, television and related online services. For more information, visit [www.cpb.org](#).



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