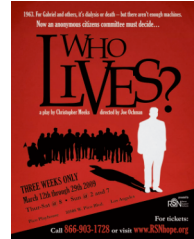




PRESS RELEASE/FEATURE

Contact: Lisa Singelyn
lisa@counterintuity.com
www.wholivesplay.com
(818) 731-0935

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Pull Quote: “1963. For Gabriel and others, it's dialysis or death -- but there aren't enough machines. Now an anonymous citizens committee must decide... WHO LIVES?”

**DIALYSIS-OR-DEATH PLAY *WHO LIVES?* TO FEATURE TRANSPLANT RECIPIENT
Sponsored by Renal Support Network During National Kidney Month, March, 2009**

GLENDALE, CA—*Who Lives?*, a morally complex play chronicling the 1960's anonymous citizens committee who determined the life-or-death fate of kidney patients applying for dialysis, will feature veteran stage actor and two-time kidney transplant recipient R. Martin “Bob” Klein, along with other renal patient-actors.

Klein, diagnosed with lupus at 19, plays “Baxter,” a cantankerous, opinionated member of the selection committee who eschews authority. At 43, side-effects of the lupus necessitated Klein’s first transplant, utilizing a kidney from a 12-year old Long Island boy. After rejecting that organ a few years later, Klein says he was “divinely blessed” with a second kidney, donated by the family of an Ohio man who was a perfect match. He says he has been “relatively healthy” ever since.

Who Lives? is the story of one man, Gabriel Hornstein, facing death due to end-stage renal disease, and his struggle to overcome a system of determining who lives, and who dies, in order to save his own life. What he uncovers in the process is an imperfect system riddled with decision-making challenges that are relatable in not just healthcare and bioethics, but in all aspects of modern society.

“It’s hard for people to understand in real terms what end-stage renal patients have to deal with,” says Klein. “Gabriel is a seeker of knowledge who has to learn how to navigate the minefield of this horrible disease. That’s exactly the way it was for me.” Klein says the more awareness *Who Lives?* raises, the more it fuels forward motion. He hopes that seeing *Who Lives?* will help people gain “a deeper perspective that they can apply to their own medical challenges.”

That’s exactly what Renal Support Network (RSN) Founder and President Lori Hartwell hopes. A kidney disease survivor and transplant recipient herself, Hartwell says, “Having lived with kidney disease for over 40 years, I am humbled by the difficult circumstances people with kidney failure have to endure, and I am eager to bring this play to life in their honor. My vision for this show has always been to present actor-patients as ‘fully functioning’ human beings, capable of performing the same jobs as non-kidney patients.” RSN is recognized as the leading non-profit, patient-run kidney organization in America.

“The 1963 dialysis selection committee represented the birth of modern medical ethics,” says Hartwell. “It was the catalyst that resulted in the ESRD entitlement program, which has saved millions of people.”

---more---

Klein agrees. “People are quick to denigrate ‘old-school’ medical, pharmaceutical and health insurance practices, but where would we be—where would I be— without them?” Through his illness, Klein says he witnessed the forefront of several medical breakthroughs, as well. “A breakthrough anti-anemia drug came out right when I started dialysis,” he says. “And the very first anti-rejection drug was released to the public the day I left the hospital. When Lori Hartwell and I had our transplants, medical science was a whole different world.”

In fact, Klein remembers reading his physician father’s Merck manual from the 1960’s and realizing his diagnosis was, at that time, a death sentence. “We hadn’t the luxury of hindsight back then,” he says. “*Who Lives?* will show people just how far we’ve come.”

Klein was not always keen on emphasizing his patient status. “I spent years trying to get past this, just as I spent years awash in the experience of dialysis, transplants, hospitals, drugs...,” he says with a sigh. “All those years I spent being sick, I dreamed of being a normal person.”

Fiercely private, Klein grappled with the “danger,” as he called it, of being typecast as a patient. But, after reading the *Who Lives?* script, he realized “that I needed to celebrate the beauty of science, of this opportunity I have been given. Nothing is a given—there are no guarantees in life—but I’ve come to realize that applies to everyone, not just me.”

Who Lives? will open on World Kidney Day, March 12th, at the Pico Playhouse, located at 10508 W. Pico Boulevard in West Los Angeles. It runs through March 29th. Performances will be held Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 p.m. and Sundays at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Written by playwright Christopher Meeks, *Who Lives?* management includes experienced producer Brett Fisher and veteran stage actor and director Joe Ochman. Both bring a strong perspective to the heart-wrenching drama behind this true story.

In conjunction with *Who Lives?*, the audience is invited to participate in three post-performance talkbacks inspired by the moral and ethical dilemmas presented in the play. Cast and crew will join special guests, including the playwright and relatives of the actual Seattle committee members, for discussion and analysis following each Sunday matinee performances.

“Hey, dialysis isn’t a walk in the park, but it’ll get you through,” said Klein. “This is truly a battle worth fighting.”

For more information, contact the Renal Support Network at 818-543-0896 or 866-903-1728. Tickets may be purchased through www.rsnhope.org or www.wholivesplay.com.

#####