

Secrets of Life and Death

Films about Death and Transformation

MEDIA CONTACT: Michelle Peticolas
CONTACT PH: 510/524-1227
EMAIL: mp@secretsoflifeanddeath.com
www.secretsoflifeanddeath.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER 25, 2011

The Lloyd Symington Foundation Awards Second Grant To Bay Area Filmmaker/Producer Dr. Michelle Peticolas Whose Films Encourage Terminally Ill Cancer Patients To Live More Fully While Facing Dying

This grant enables Dr. Michelle Peticolas to continue distribution of *Secrets of Life and Death*, a series that encourages “dialogue about death,” to cancer organizations nationwide and to design supplemental tools to assist them.

Last years recipient organizations, including Commonweal, UCSF’s Helen Diller Cancer Center, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, Charlotte Maxwell Complementary Clinic and affiliates of the Cancer Support Community and Gilda’s Club, are using the films for both cancer staff and their clients to facilitate awareness and discussion about death.

“People with cancer need to know all their options and having a comfortable and conscious death is one of their options,” says Dr. Michelle Peticolas, local filmmaker and producer of the film series, *Secrets of Life and Death*. The grant will allow more cancer-care organizations to screen her award-winning films *Facing Death . . . with open eyes* and *Caring for Dying: the art of being present*, as part of their community education and staff training programs. The award will also support the design of user’s guides and web resource pages to assist workshop facilitators and individual viewers at these organizations.

“We live in a world that makes it hard to talk about death,” explains Dr. Peticolas. By making her films available to the cancer community, she hopes to facilitate conversation and sharing of information among people highly vulnerable to a system that sees death as failure.

Based in Marin County, the Lloyd Symington Foundation provides grants to innovative, grassroots programs to relieve the physical and emotional suffering of cancer patients and their families and to enhance their overall quality of life.

Dr. Peticolas’s films show how awareness of death can bring personal and spiritual growth and comfort. The El Cerrito resident has been producing and distributing her film series, *Secrets of Life and Death*, since the deaths of her own parents in 1998. *The Heart of Grieving*, the third film in the *Secrets of Life and Death Series*, was completed last January. Universities throughout the U.S. and Canada are using the series in training programs for nurses, psychologists, chaplain, and social workers. Dr. Peticolas leads film-screening workshops at churches, schools, libraries, community organizations, and hospices throughout the Bay Area.

Interested organizations can learn more about the *Secrets of Life and Death Film Series* at www.secretsoflifeanddeath.com and by contacting Dr. Peticolas at 510-524-1227.