



OCTOBER 2004

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## Letters and Media Alerts

Compiled and distributed by SCDMH Office of Public Affairs

# Palmetto Media Watch

## In the News: Linda Hamilton on Bipolar Disorder

MSNBC.com has posted a report in which Linda Hamilton talks about her diagnosis of bipolar disorder. According to the article, “The 'Terminator' star was 'a woman in hell' before treatment. Actress Linda Hamilton, best known for her role as Sarah Connor in the "Terminator" movies, has struggled with depression most of her life and was a compulsive eater as a child.”

To read the complete article, click the following link: [Linda Hamilton Article](#)

## Media Watchers Speak Out!

In the last newsletter, we told you about Universal Studios’ “Halloween Horrors” event, the Publicity media kits of which included a committal form to a fictitious psychiatric ward for a visitor who might be "driven insane" by the event and a personalized straight jacket for each reporter. The event’s Web site ([click here](#)) features a man in a straight jacket with horrific head movements and facial expressions headlined "Halloween Horror Nights” at Universal Orlando.

We’d like to spotlight the following letter, sent by Media Watcher Cynthia Koethe. Great job, Cynthia!

Mr. Robert Gault  
Universal Orlando Studios  
100 Universal Studios Plaza  
Orlando, FL 32819-7610

Dear Mr. Gault:

Recently I learned of the stigmatizing mental illness theme for Universal Orlando Theme Parks Halloween Horrors.

Mental illness is a serious physical, as well as psychological illness that affects millions of Americans. Surely you would not use another disease, such as cancer or heart disease, in such an insensitive manner.

At present there are a number of treatment options for people with mental illness. Both drug and “talk” therapies, among others, provide great relief to many. Stigmatizing mental illness with stereotypes and myths from past centuries sends the wrong message to those who need help.

Please reconsider the Halloween Horrors mental illness theme. Your creative staff can choose from many other truly scary horrors in the world to frighten the visitors to this event.

Thank you for reading this letter. We need you and other people in the media to help raise awareness of the fact that mental illnesses are treatable medical conditions.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Koethe

# MEDIA ALERT: Doctor Phil McGraw

From NAMI.org Stigmabusters:

## NAMI Blasts CBS & Dr. Phil for Television Malpractice

NAMI has charged CBS TV with gross irresponsibility for its September 22 broadcast of the "Dr. Phil Primetime Special: Family First," in which the so-called pop psychologist not only "blamed parents first," but may have endangered the lives of children with severe mental illnesses.

"Not only did the show represent a breach of professional ethics, but also, in the opinion of many, malpractice," declared NAMI executive director Michael J. Fitzpatrick, in a letter to CBS Chairman & CEO Leslie Moonves, co-signed by Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia, MD, a child psychiatrist who chairs the Child & Adolescent Policy Subcommittee of NAMI's national board.

The show was especially troubling because the child's behavior may have suggested symptoms of bipolar disorder, requiring treatment vastly different from a father being admonished to spend more time with his son to 'go fishing.'

"Blaming the family undermines all recent understanding of the biological basis of brain disorders and is not only insensitive, but also hinders a family or individual from seeking comprehensive treatment," NAMI warned.

StigmaBusters are asked to contact CBS to protest "pop" diagnoses and to ask for a network-wide review of its standards and practices concerning mental illness and related issues. Speak from the heart!

## More Information:

NAMI has posted their letter to CBS Chairman and CEO Les Moonves. To read this letter, click the link below. It contains some talking points you can use in correspondence to the Network.

[NAMI CBS Letter](#)

Here is a link to an article that provides more information about the incident from the Washington Post: [Washington Post Article](#)

### The Contact Info:

Mr. Leslie Moonves  
Chairman & CEO  
CBS Television  
1515 Broadway  
New York, NY 10036

You can also offer  
feedback at the CBS Web  
site: [CBS.com](http://CBS.com)

### Have you seen Stigma?

If you spot stigma in the media, let us know! E-mail us at [SP452@dmh.state.sc.us](mailto:SP452@dmh.state.sc.us), or call us at (800) 763-1024, and be sure to copy us in on your correspondence.

We'd like to include letters like Cynthia's in each newsletter.