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Durham, NH - As a life-long educator, Principal Gene Connolly was passionate about including students with disabilities in regular classes.

Those personal connections with students and families would have a profound impact on his life when his own health and abilities declined, preventing him from continuing his career.

Offering a hopeful and rewarding portrait of community and the power of inclusivity, *Mr. Connolly Has ALS*, by award-winning filmmaker Dan Habib, will have its national broadcast premier on WORLD Channel’s Local, USA. Public television airings will start on June 11, 2018 at 6pm and 9pm Eastern Standard Time ([check local listings](#)).

“Making *Mr. Connolly Has ALS* was an incredibly personal journal for

me and my family,” said filmmaker Dan Habib. “My son, Samuel attended Concord High School during Mr. Connolly’s final years as principal. As I watched Gene and my son speak to each other using their computer communication devices, I knew I needed to document this journey. Thankfully, Gene was also interested in sharing his story and the students of Concord High welcomed the opportunity to have open and honest conversations about how to live life fully, develop resilience, and approach an inevitable death with honesty and dignity.”

Mr. Connolly Has ALS chronicles Connolly’s final year as principal of the school, when his physical abilities are significantly limited. The outpouring of love and support from the students, evident as they engage with him in the film, is both remarkable and inspiring.

The film will be steaming for free for one month starting on June 11 on [WORLD](#), on PBS, and the [PBS app](#). Captions will be available to viewers.

Mr. Connolly Has ALS has nationally been recognized by [The ALS Association](#), and is underwritten by [MobilityWorks](#) accessible vans and [Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation](#).

Film Synopsis

During his 14-year tenure at Concord High School, Principal Gene Connolly was known for his non-stop energy, his love of rock & roll, and the personal connections he made with many of the school’s 1,600 students. However, in 2014, Connolly received a devastating diagnosis: Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig’s Disease). Since the onset of his illness, Connolly showed tremendous persistence, humor, and leadership in the face of this degenerative and fatal disease. Connolly credits the school and the greater Concord community as a source of unfailing support and understanding as his illness progressed.

About the Filmmaker

Director/Producer/ Cinematographer Dan Habib is the creator of the

award-winning documentary films *Including Samuel*, *Who Cares About Kelsey?*, *Mr. Connolly Has ALS* and many other short films on education and disability-related topics. Habib is a filmmaker at the University of New Hampshire’s Institute on Disability, and he is also releasing a new feature-length documentary, *Intelligent Lives*, which examines our society’s perceptions of intelligence. Habib’s feature *Including Samuel* broadcasted nationally on public television stations in the fall of 2009, and *Who Cares About Kelsey?* aired on public television in the fall of 2013. Both films were nominated for Emmy Awards and featured in dozens of film festivals. *Including Samuel* has been translated into 17 languages and is used as a teaching tool worldwide.

In 2012, Habib received the Champion of Human and Civil Rights Award from the National Education Association, and in 2013, he received the Justice for All Grassroots Award from the American Association of People with Disabilities. In November 2013, Habib delivered a TEDx talk titled “Disabling Segregation” on the benefits of inclusive education. In 2014, Habib was appointed by President Barack Obama to the President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities—a committee that promotes policies and initiatives that support independence and lifelong inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. Habib and his wife, Betsy, live in Concord, New Hampshire with their sons Isaiah, 21, and Samuel, 18.

For more information, please access the [electronic press kit](#).

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