PBS Announces Premiere Date for AMERICAN ANTHEMS,

A New Series Celebrating Everyday Heroes With Original Songs Written and Performed by Country Music’s Biggest Stars

Six-Episode Music-Driven Documentary Series Features Grammy Winner Jennifer Nettles, Grammy Nominees Lee Brice and Cam, Americana Duo The War and Treaty, Breakout Stars Lindsay Ell and Ruston Kelly, and More

Co-Produced by NBCUniversal Syndication Studios and Believe Entertainment Group, AMERICAN ANTHEMS Premieres Friday, June 24, 10:00-10:30 p.m. ET on PBS

*Interviews Available Upon Request; Watch* [*Episode 1*](https://www.pbs.org/video/american-anthems-episode-one-promo-cxp2wu/) *&* [*Episode 2*](https://www.pbs.org/video/american-anthems-episode-two-promo-crepgz/) *Promos;*

*Assets Available on* [*PBS PressRoom*](https://pressroom.pbs.org/Programs/a/American-Anthems)

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| Country music star Jennifer Nettles and composer Bill Sherman collaborate on an original song. Photo courtesy of Believe Entertainment Group. |

ARLINGTON, VA (May 11, 2022) – Across the country, in every community, unsung heroes are quietly working to improve the lives of others. Their inspiring efforts often receive little fanfare — until now. **AMERICAN** **ANTHEMS**, a new six-episode series from PBS, NBCUniversal Syndication Studios and Believe Entertainment Group, celebrates these everyday heroes with surprise songs from today’s biggest country music stars, including Jennifer Nettles, Lee Brice, The War and Treaty, Lindsay Ell, Cam and Ruston Kelly. **AMERICAN** **ANTHEMS** premieres on Friday, June 24, from 10:00-10:30 p.m. ET (check local listings) on PBS, [PBS.org](http://pbs.org/) and the [PBS Video app](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/).

Each episode of **AMERICAN** **ANTHEMS** will follow a different featured country star as they meet a local hero and learn about the transformative experience that inspired their commitment to making a positive change in their community. Then, working with a celebrated songwriter — including Sugarland’s Kristian Bush, collaborators Billy Montana and Adam Wood, and Bill Sherman — the country star will secretly turn the hero’s story of kindness, hard work and perseverance into an epic original song. At the end of the episode, the hero will be surprised with a once-in-a-lifetime performance of the powerful anthem by the artist while surrounded by family and friends.

**“AMERICAN ANTHEMS** is an amazing show that truly captures how simple acts of kindness result in larger-than-life outcomes,” said Academy of Country Music Award winner Lee Brice. “A good country song is like a good deed — they are simple, heartfelt stories with long-lasting impact.”

Among the six heroes honored on **AMERICAN ANTHEMS** are a father who started a nonprofit to help families of cancer patients while undergoing cancer treatment himself and a former police officer who founded an organization that supports survivors of sexual abuse after struggling to recover from her own attack. Viewers will also meet a service-oriented young woman whose nonprofit provides free laundry days in low-income areas; an enterprising public school board member who has made it her mission to collect books featuring Black characters for children who otherwise would not have access to diverse stories; a military veteran working to save retired police and military K-9s; and a creative performing arts director who teaches theater to intellectually disabled adults.

“There are heroes all around us, and we’re so appreciative to be part of honoring some of our nation’s most overlooked and forgotten — especially the ones on all fours,” said Americana duo The War and Treaty’s Michael Trotter Jr. A veteran himself, Trotter and wife Tanya write and perform an original song for Jason Johnson, a decorated military veteran and the founder of Project K9 Hero.

Directed by two-time Country Music Association Award winner Wes Edwards, **AMERICAN ANTHEMS** is a co-production of NBCUniversal Syndication Studios and Believe Entertainment Group. Dan Goodman is the executive in charge for Believe Entertainment Group. Brenda Brkusic Milinkovic is the executive in charge for NBCUniversal Syndication Studios. Bill Gardner is the executive in charge for PBS. Grammy, Tony, and Emmy Award-winning composer Bill Sherman serves as executive music producer for the series. **AMERICAN ANTHEMS** was made possible by Chick-fil-A and Heroes Vacation Club, a service of Travel + Leisure Co.

An overview of the **AMERICAN ANTHEMS** episodes is provided below:

**Episode 1: Life is Sweet**

***Premieres Friday, June 24, 10:00 p.m. ET***

**Unsung Hero:** Seth Grumet, Founder of STOMP The Monster™

**Singer/Songwriter:** Jennifer Nettles (Grammy, ACM, CMA, CMT & AMA Winner)

**Songwriter:** Bill Sherman (Grammy, Tony & Emmy Winner)

**Description:** When Seth Grumet was diagnosed with cancer, he was surrounded by an impenetrable network of family and friends who helped at every step of his journey. It was during this experience that Seth learned just how rare it is to have a community of support, so he started an organization called STOMP The Monster™ to provide the kind of support system he relied on so heavily to those who are not as fortunate to have the same. After spending an emotional day with Seth, Grammy winner Jennifer Nettles draws out the incredible acts kindness and hope from his story to write a song in Seth’s honor with award-winning composer Bill Sherman. Performing the soaring anthem about Seth’s life in front of his family and friends, Jennifer leaves a surprised audience without a dry eye in the house.

**Episode 2: Pocket Change**

***Premieres Friday, July 1, 10:00 p.m. ET***

**Unsung Hero:** Ashley Ruiz, Team Leader for “The Laundry Project,” Nashville

**Singer/Songwriter**: Lee Brice (Grammy & CMA Nominee, ACM Winner)

**Songwriter: Billy** Montana (songwriter for Garth Brooks, Tim McGraw, Kenny Rogers, Martina McBride, Lee Brice and more, with six singles on Billboard country charts) and Adam Wood (songwriter for Lee Brice, Trace Adkins, Lonestar and more)

**Description:** When Ashley Ruiz returned to the U.S. after two-and-a-half years in Puerto Rico, she began helping a friend with his simple yet unbelievably impactful idea: take over a laundromat in a low-income area for a day and pay for as much laundry as each patron can wash. Realizing that their small act made such a big difference, Ashley dedicated herself to the organization, The Laundry Project. She and her volunteers call themselves “hope dealers” because they offer dignity and hope to those who struggle with the demands of everyday life. Grammy nominee Lee Brice spends a day with Ashley at the laundromat and sees how a little bit of “pocket change” can change one’s life. This becomes the inspiration for Lee to work with two famed songwriting collaborators, Billy Montana and Adam Wood, to create a song that honors Ashley and her band of “hope dealers.”

**Episode 3: Soldier on All Fours**

***Premieres Friday, July 8, 10:00 p.m. ET***

**Unsung Hero:** Jason Johnson, Founder of Project K-9 Hero

**Singer/Songwriter:** The War and Treaty

**Description:** Jason Johnson is a decorated military veteran who spent years in the Middle East as a K-9 handler. At the end of his tour in Iraq, Jason learned that once military K-9s are retired, all government care and funding stops. That’s when Jason started Project K-9 Hero, a nonprofit that provides the best quality of life for retired police and military working dogs. The War and Treaty (Michael and Tanya Trotter) meet Jason to learn his story of support and the dogs’ stories of heroism. Overcoming his long-standing fear of dogs, Michael, who is also a veteran, recognizes the healing power of these incredible animals. With this life-changing experience in mind, Michael and Tanya write a song that honors Jason’s advocacy and raises awareness of the challenges K-9s face after service. What transpires is a powerful and soulful ballad no one will ever forget.

**Episode 4: Let the Words Come Out**

***Premieres Friday, July 15, 10:00 p.m. ET***

**Unsung Hero**: Greta McLain, Executive Director of Silent No Longer

**Singer/Songwriter:** Lindsay Ell (ACM & CMA Nominee)

**Songwriter:** Kristian Bush (Grammy, ACM, CMA & CMT Winner)

**Description:** Greta McClain was a former police detective in the sexual assault division who suffered a horrible sexual assault of her own. While dealing with the self-imposed shame, Greta began talking with other survivors on social media and decided to start Silent No More, an organization that provides a safe space for survivors of sexual abuse. Country star Lindsay Ell, also a survivor of sexual assault, instantly bonds with Greta as they engage in a day of creative therapy. After learning about Greta’s service to her community, Lindsay and her close friend, legendary singer/songwriter Kristian Bush of Sugarland, craft an electric country rock anthem for Greta to use as the fight song in her mission of caring.

**Episode 5: Make Tomorrow Come Today**

***Premieres Friday, July 22, 10:00 p.m. ET***

**Unsung Hero:** Meredith McKinney, Founder of The Black Book Project

**Singer/Songwriter:** Cam (Grammy, ACM, CMA & Nominee)

**Songwriter:** Dre Williams

**Description:** As a child, Meredith McKinney would take a brown crayon and color the faces of the white-skinned protagonists in her books to make them resemble herself. Today, not only is diversity still lacking in children’s literature nationwide, but books have become increasingly expensive. So, Meredith launched the Black Book Project to collect books featuring diverse characters for low-income youth and then distribute them through schools, non-profits, businesses, government institutions, religious organizations and other community groups. Grammy nominee Cam is no stranger to advocating for diversity, and together, she and Meredith explore the fact that while much has changed since they were young, so much remains the same. It was this idea that compelled Cam to join forces with songwriter Dre Williams to treat Meredith and many of the children she has helped to a surprise performance of a stirring folk anthem urging us all to act now.

**Episode 6: What You’re Here For**

***Premieres Friday, July 29, 10:00 p.m. ET***

**Unsung Hero:** Melissa Smith, Founder of Blacklight Productions

**Singer/Songwriter:** Ruston Kelly

**Songwriter:** Kate York (best known for her prolific songwriting on the hit series “Nashville”)

**Description:** Melissa Smith moved to town with a performing arts degree and no plan. As fate would have it, she accepted a job at a local thrift store that employed intellectually disabled adults and knew it was an experience that would change her life. That’s when she created Backlight Productions, a performing arts organization that combines her background in theater with her interest in serving the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) community. Singer/songwriter Ruston Kelly also knows what it means to make a major life change, having originally planned and trained to be an Olympic ice-skating champion. After spending a full day with Melissa, including participating in a dress rehearsal for an upcoming play, Ruston reaches out to his close friend, songwriter Kate York, to create a deeply personal piano ballad celebrating Melissa’s work and the good we can do once we realize our purpose.

For more information on **AMERICAN ANTHEMS** visit [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org/). Viewers are also encouraged to engage in online conversation about the series by tagging **@PBS** and using **#AmericanAnthems** on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pbs/), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/pbs) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/pbs/?hl=en).

**About PBS**

[PBS](http://www.pbs.org/), with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 120 million people on air and 26 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS’s broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry’s most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. Decades of research confirms that PBS’s premier children’s media service, PBS KIDS, helps children build critical literacy, math, and social-emotional skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality educational content on TV — including a 24/7 channel, online at [pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org/), via an array of mobile apps and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at [pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org/), one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](https://twitter.com/pbs), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pbs) or through our  [apps for mobile and connected devices](http://www.pbs.org/anywhere/home/). Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pressroom.pbs.org/)  or by following [PBS Communications on Twitter](https://twitter.com/PBS_PR).

**About NBCUniversal Syndication Studios**

Emmy-winning NBCUniversal Syndication Studios is responsible for the production, sales and distribution of NBCUniversal products to broadcast television within the United States. The division develops and produces first-run programming and distributes these shows, along with off-network content, in broadcast syndication. Current first-run broadcast syndicated programming includes “Access Hollywood,” “Access Daily,” “The Kelly Clarkson Show,” “Judge Jerry,” “The Jerry Springer Show,” “Maury” and “The Steve Wilkos Show.” In addition, the division distributes the retro television broadcast network Cozi TV and the weekend syndicated series “Open House.” Current off-network programming includes “The Office,” “American Ninja Warrior,” “Law & Order: Criminal Intent,” “Law & Order: Special Victims Unit,” “Chicago Fire,” “Chicago P.D.,” “Monk” and “Dateline.”

**About Believe Entertainment Group**

[Believe Entertainment Group,](http://believeent.com/) winner of Academy and Emmy awards, is an innovative studio that has been creating multi-platform, talent-driven content for all distribution verticals (film, TV, digital, podcasts) since 2009. Believe won its Academy and Emmy awards for *Dear Basketball*, the animated short film written by Kobe Bryant, scored by the prolific John Williams, and directed and animated by Disney legend Glen Keane.

Other stand-out Believe projects include *Between Me and My Mind*, a feature-length documentary on Trey Anastasio (Phish) that premiered at Tribeca Film Festival; “The LeBrons,” a multi-season animated kids series with NBA champion LeBron James; “In the Booth,” a four-season follow-doc series with superstar DJ/producer Tiësto; and “Tiger Beat Entertainment,” a young adult pop culture series with Jennifer Lopez. Trilith Studios (formerly Pinewood Atlanta Studios) and U.K.-based ITV are Believe’s two largest shareholders and board members. Believe is represented by CAA.

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