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RE: Wildlife Education Project

Local Celebrity Animal to be featured on National Television Network Nat Geo WILD *Nat Geo WILD highlights Trouper the Blind Raccoon and his caregiver Dorothy "Dot" Lee*

FORT MYERS, Fla. (May 11, 2016)- Saturday, May 21 will be a historic day for Southwest Florida's popular animal icon Trouper the Blind Raccoon. Trouper's friends from the Wildlife Education Project (WEP), for whom he is an Animal Ambassador, will gather to watch his national television debut. **Trouper, along with his caregiver Dorothy "Dot" Lee, will appear in an episode of "Unlikely Animal Friends" on Saturday, May 21 at 8/7c PM on Nat Geo WILD, where their unusual relationship will be highlighted.** The unlikely duo have made a name for themselves among Southwest Florida residents for their extensive work in educating children and adults on the importance of respecting wildlife and caring for our planet and each other.

While Trouper is a living 7-year-old raccoon, he is not a pet nor is he wild. What makes him special is that he is a federally licensed and fully vaccinated wildlife ambassador for WEP, an organization that teaches the public and school children through their educational sessions, website and materials to treat wildlife, the environment and all living things with respect. "Unlikely Animal Friends" will feature footage that captures Trouper's role in providing educational presentations to children, as well as scenes of his daily life with Lee.

Trouper's story is one of tragedy to triumph that resonates strongly with wildlife lovers and has caught the attention of the television show. As an 8-week-old kit (baby raccoon), a golfer beat him in the head with a golf club, requiring emergency care. He survived the beating and other problems, but it left him blind, brain damaged, and unable to feed or defend himself. He lives with wildlife rehabilitator Dorothy "Dot" Lee who rescued Trouper as a kit and now provides him with the 24-hour care he requires. She has retrained him to use his motor skills and describes Trouper as "rehabilitation in progress." Ironically, Lee is also legally blind.

Trouper's harrowing story of survival inspired the founding of the WEP in the hopes that educational intervention would stop others from perpetrating acts of cruelty such as the one Trouper suffered, as well as to educate future leaders to respect their world and to promote environmental stewardship.

Trouper's lessons of respect are also the subject of the award-winning book "TROUPER—The True Adventures of a Blind Raccoon: The Beginning" by Fort Myers children's author and educator Kyle Miller.

The WEP is a non-profit organization with the vision to instill a lifelong respect for all living things and the environment through our mission of education and empowerment of human kind to create change and take responsibility for the protection of our wildlife and surroundings. www.wildlifeeducationproject.org, www.trouperaccoon.com and www.facebook.com/Wildlifeeducationproject

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Photo: Trouper the Blind Raccoon and his caregiver, Dorothy "Dot" Lee, will make their national television debut on "Unlikely Animal Friends" on Saturday, May 21 at 8/7c PM on Nat Geo WILD. Trouper is a federally licensed and fully vaccinated wildlife ambassador for the Wildlife Education Project (WEP). Courtesy photo: Wildlife Education Project. Note: Additional high-resolution photos are available upon request.