

Austin activists unite for controversial film

After winning the "Spirit of Independents" award at the Ft. Lauderdale International Film Festival, Emmy award winning director Robert Manciero was shocked when the film didn't make the cut at Austin's South by Southwest. Especially since the documentary features two Austin area families.

The film "Prescription:Suicide?" takes an intimate look at the personal impact of antidepressant drugs on children and teenagers. Six families (two from the Austin area) dramatically describe their feelings and reactions, their relationships with the medical professionals involved, and how they cope with the tasks of daily living and challenges resulting from these medications.

Vividly shot with real families across the United States, it is yet a project with global implications that strikes at the very meaning of medical traditions in our modern society. The film captures a sense of the arguments in a currently ongoing controversy that affects millions of Americans, and ultimately asks the question if these so-called revolutionary medications can be used safely.

Knowing the current importance, Austinite Gwen Olsen took matters into her own hands. She organized an independent showing of the documentary on March 10, the day SXSW begins. "I'm proud to present this film," said Olsen, an author and activist. "I'm not sure what the folks at SXSW were thinking. The debate over children and antidepressants may well be one of the most important debates of our time."

Gwen Olsen is very familiar with the subject matter, and such bold moves are not unfamiliar to her. After withdrawing from a toxic cocktail of psychotropic drugs, her niece took her life by setting herself on fire which prompted Gwen to expose her 15-year long career as a sales representative for the pharmaceutical industry. She turned her experiences into a book: "Confessions of an Rx Drug Pusher".

Thus Gwen Olsen began her own campaign for a film screening calling on the support of friends, neighbors and colleagues all over Austin as well as Texas. The Unity Church of the Hills agreed to host her event.

Following the showing, a guest panel will conduct a Q&A to answer audience questions and direct viewers to appropriate resources. The panel will consist of Gwen Olsen, two of the Austin-area families featured in the film, the McIntosh family and the Brooks family; Dr. John Breeding, local author and psychologist; Lee Spiller, Executive Director of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights of

Texas; Gina Vickery Ross from well known Texas attorney Andy Vickery's office, and the director of the film Robert Manciero from Los Angeles.

"By now I can say that we are expecting quite a big turnout, probably bigger than some of the films being shown at the SxSW that evening," said Gwen Olsen. Added Lee Spiller: "This film is really important. A continuing campaign at CCHR is to make sure parents and other caregivers are truly informed about the risks involved with psychiatric treatment. Brutal restraints, mind altering drugs, as the families featured in "Prescription: Suicide?" can tell you, the risks are all too real and families deserve to be informed. We tip our hats to Gwen for bringing this film to town. "

Time and place of the screening:

Friday March 10 - 7pm

Unity Church of the Hills

9905 Anderson Mill Road

Austin, Texas

"Prescription: Suicide?" is being distributed by Full Vision Productions with assistance provided by the grassroots marketing campaign organization www.ParticipateNow.net.

For more information contact:

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Websites:

<http://www.gwenolsen.com>

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<http://www.participatenow.net>