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Upcoming documentary will highlight health risks of asbestos

AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com 35 min ago

Submitted

Western Kentucky University graduate Bryan Lemon said he encountered some of the strongest people he's ever known while making "Dirty Laundry," a documentary about people affected by mesothelioma.

"These people are some of the most positive individuals for having something so horrific happen to them," said Lemon, one of two WKU graduates who produced the film, which will be screened at Van Meter Hall at 6 p.m. Nov. 13. The event is free.

After mesothelioma, a form of cancer caused by exposure to asbestos, kills their 90-year-old grandmother, cousins Conor Lewis and Zack Johnson set off on bicycles across the country in an effort to find answers.

Their journey features surviving family members, doctors, activists and communities still living with active, toxic asbestos sites, according to a news release.

Lewis, the film's director and producer, graduated from WKU's art department in 2012 and began a career in digital media in St. Louis, where he grew up, the news release said. Lemon, who graduated from WKU's photojournalism program in 2012, works as a photographer for WKU public affairs and contributed to the film as a producer and writer.

The film, which has been shown at 10 film festivals, was shot between August and October 2016 and produced the following year. It debuted at its first film festival in March, Lemon said.

"Reception has been really positive," he said, noting that people are drawn to the film by some knowledge or connection to the disease.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral substance that can be pulled into a fibrous material and used as an insulator or to strengthen materials like cloth, paper or cement, according to asbestos.com.

The same qualities that make asbestos useful for businesses also make it harmful. People are put at risk when they breathe in the fibers, which can cause disease over time.

The problem with asbestos, Lemon said, is that the danger is closer than people realize. It exists in office buildings, homes and products that come to the U.S. from overseas, he said.

"It's important to know how to deal with it when you find it," he said.

The upcoming screening will include a question-and-answer session at the conclusion of the film.

The film will also be available for digital rental, purchase and streaming in 2019, according to the news release. More information is available online at asbestos.movie.

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Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.

