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"Haze" to teach alcohol awareness

Documentary focuses on college drinking

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A new documentary that aims to promote alcohol awareness on college campuses will be released this spring.

The film, called "Haze," includes a discussion about CU's Greek system and footage of Boulder.

Leslie Lanahan, the mother of Lynn Gordon "Gordie" Bailey Jr., a pledge at CU's Chi Psi fraternity who died of alcohol poisoning in 2004, produced the film with her husband.

Lanahan, a co-founder of The Gordie Foundation, which promotes alcohol safety and awareness, said the film will be a way to educate other students about drinking.

"The film was originally conceived by family members and friends," Lanahan said. "It will be an educational tool of The Gordie Foundation."

Lanahan said that what started as a public service announcement on the dangers of drinking has become a full-length documentary since her son's death.

"We wanted to get the word out about the dangers of alcohol poisoning and hazing that so few people seem to know about," she said.

The public service announcement was to include an interview with family friend Jamie Widdoes who played "Hoover" in the 1978 college film "Animal House."

"The project grew as we got into it," she said. "We had way more information than a 30-second PSA."

Widdoes and the movie "Animal House" still appear in the film.

Some students have said that the online trailer for "Haze" appears to portray CU in a negative light by using footage of the campus and local fraternities.

"I feel as though the trailer perhaps does not portray things accurately," said Sara Davine, a senior international affairs major and UCSU Tri-Executive. "It is hard to say, though, because no one has seen the film in its entirety because it has not yet been fully released."

However, Lanahan said she is confident that the finished film will not affect CU in such a negative way.

"I am fairly confident that CU will be okay with the film in the end," Lanahan said. "There are many, many schools portrayed. We make a point of saying that the problem is national."

She also said the film was not meant to target the activities of CU or its Greek community.

"The whole film gives a much larger picture," Lanahan said. "We would like CU students to understand that we are not anti-Greek or anti-CU."

Davine said UCSU and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Ron Stump have been in contact to discuss possible repercussions for CU.

"Ultimately, I think that the school, UCSU, and the Greek community are responding appropriately and maturely to the documentary itself," Davine said.

Robb Watt, 46, the owner of the film's production company, Watt Imagination! in Colorado Springs, said the film takes a close look at the Greek community.

"The purpose is to look at the Greek system," Watt said. "That's where Gordie died. That's where so many other kids have died as well."

Watt's company has been involved with similar productions such as "Tell Me Something I Don't Know," a film about the alcohol-related death of Scott Krueger, an MIT student who also died during fraternity hazing.

Watt said the film focuses on other issues outside the Greek community as well.

"You will definitely see other schools in the full feature," Watt said. "You will also see less focus just on fraternities. The film explores the 21 drinking age, advertising alcohol to minors, parents' roles, (and) the extreme behavior by all students, not just the Greek system. There are hopes that 'Haze' will be a life-saving documentary."

Watt said he also hopes the film will be accepted into the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City after positive reviews from screenings in select test markets.

Lanahan said she hopes the film will be useful in both colleges and high schools, as well as to parents for teaching alcohol and hazing safety.

She said she and her husband have been working with Watt Imagination! for a year and a half creating the film and working on interviews. She said the film should be released this spring.

Lanahan also said she wanted the film to be a catalyst for change within college communities.

"If we can be a part of creating this change, then we will feel Gordie's tragic death will not be in vain," she said. "It's time for us all to wake up to this problem."

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