

Mountain Democrat

PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA

Prospecting

Local woman's journey through hell part of national movie

By Pat Lakey

From page B1 | September 14, 2015



Merrily Melson holds a photo of her son Andrew who was murdered by his father in 2008. Democrat photo by Krysten Kellum

more than 50 times with a screwdriver. The man who fathered Andrew — and who previously had given no indication he was capable of such a vile, unspeakable act.

Remember a little over seven years ago when that little 2 1/2-year-old boy was taken by his homicidal father from the family home in Shingle Springs and the community held its breath waiting for the outcome?

Think back on the collective heartbreak when we all learned that Andrew Bailey was dead, murdered by his father who then discarded his tiny, broken body behind the Kmart in Martell, Amador County.

For most of us, it takes a moment or two to recollect the details — but that day in March 2008 is indelibly seared in Merrily Melson's mind. That's the day her baby died.

She won't even say his name, the man who stabbed her child

National film

Merrily Melson's tragic story is one of 11 that are told in a new film that will air nationally, including a showing Sept. 23 at the Signature Theater in Placerville. Titled "Finding Jenn's Voice," the documentary is directed by Tracy Schott, a social worker/film producer who decided to take on her first feature film after hearing the story of Jennifer Snyder.

"Jenn," as she is called in the film, was pregnant by her married lover, a veterinarian in whose office she worked in Allentown, Pa., in 2011. The two-year affair ended when David Rapoport shot Jenn twice in the mouth, once in the back and then dumped her body in a wooded ravine. He is serving two life sentences for the murder of Jenn and her unborn child.

Director Schott was moved by Jenn's story and became passionate once she learned that the No. 1 cause of death for pregnant women is homicide. She set out to find similar victims and tell their stories.

"'Finding Jenn's Voice' is a suspenseful and emotional ride through the terror of living with the threat of being killed by someone that you love," states a synopsis of the movie.



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Knows terror

Melson knows about that terror, although it didn't occur during the six years of being with Charles Bailey until the very end of their relationship. She saw a notice that director Schott was seeking women with stories of domestic violence, particularly if they were pregnant at the time, and although she didn't fit that exact criterion, she contacted Schott anyway.

"I wasn't pregnant but my baby was killed," she said recently at her home in Diamond Springs, lips pursed in grim thought. "The others in the film, they are my sisters, that's what I call them and a lot of them *were* pregnant, but the common theme was that they were victim to a man who controlled them. For one of them, who was pregnant, the man even controlled when she became pregnant, when she would deliver — everything.

"I knew that kind of power and control was what drove my baby's murderer so I sent Tracy Schott a message and she answered."

Knowing signs

What is so compelling about Melson's story is not the obvious loss of her beloved little boy. It's the way the now 41-year-old woman has dealt with the devastating blow, picking herself up and hoping to make Andrew's death cause a ripple of positive change.

"I want people to know that there are red flags, flags that I didn't recognize then," she said while seated in her living room where a photo of Andrew occupies a place of honor on a main wall. "I kept telling myself that he was behaving that way because he was 17 years older than me or that it was because he was black and it was a cultural thing.

"Never did I think he was a murderer."

But he was, as the events of March 15, 2008 bear out all too horribly.

Melson had told Charles that she wanted their relationship to end and he seemed to handle the news fairly well — maybe a little too well, she reflected.

"He said, 'We'll handle it, Honeybee,' and then six weeks later he tried to murder me," she recounted. "At first he started wooing me all over again, told me over and over, 'I love you, Honeybee' — what the sisters call 'love-bombing' me.

"All it did was push me farther away because I was already past the point (of no return)."

The day before the assault, where Melson would be doused with drain cleaner and ammonia and attacked with an ax and hammer before her beloved child was kidnapped, she said Charles Bailey "was quiet, cold and scary."

"It was 10 at night — this was March 14 — and I was in my pajamas but he was fully clothed and drinking beer," she recalled. "I remember thinking that it was odd, because he rarely drank. But he was trying to get me to drink alcohol too — and I really don't drink.

"We were staying on my parents' property in Shingle Springs, in a fifth-wheel, and I remember I made a mistake when I accidentally let him know my parents were gone, that they were on a fishing trip."

Goodbye

Melson had said something about "Andrew looking so cute waving goodbye" to his grandparents and right after she said it, she wished she could take back her words. It was a wish that couldn't come true.

That night, "the air was so thick, crackling with tension and it was so cold and dark outside, being March. I remember going to bed and being fearful that he could hear my heartbeat, it was so loud.

“And this is a man who had exhibited no physical violence ever, no alcohol or drug problems.”

It was about 3 a.m. March 15 when Melson heard Bailey slip out of their bed, so quietly that she couldn't understand how he did it in the fragile fifth-wheel without causing a vibration. She pretended to sleep as she kept hearing him adjust the thermostat to keep the heater going, wondering why he was so intent on adjusting the control.

Later she would understand why: “It was to cover the noise of what he was doing.”

Bailey was in the bathroom gathering drain cleaner and ammonia, which he had purchased together with heavy-duty gloves and a drywall ax, which has a hammer on one end, a blade on the other, Melson would learn later.

“The receipt the cops showed me where he bought all these things — he bought them on my birthday, Feb. 22,” she said, eyes still reflecting her soul's attempt to understand.

“He came into the bedroom and said, ‘I'm going to kill you!’ and then I felt liquid spraying on me, covering me, soaking my face, my head, all over me,” said Melson, her voice gaining speed and incredulity all these years later. “I thought, ‘He's just poured something on me and now he's going to light me on fire!’”

Melson was out of bed and trying to find an escape route but, blinded by the chemicals, “I walked right into him.”

Details became blurred, she said, and she's not certain when her eyesight cleared enough to know it — but she knew it — he had an ax.

“I remember thinking, ‘He has an ax, he has an ax!’ and I know I was pinned on the bathroom floor. But I lost half an hour. I don't know how long the attack lasted, but then something happened — and I don't know how to explain it.”

Inner voice

Melson took a deep breath and her eyes calmed as she looked squarely at her listeners.

“I heard my own voice say, ‘Go for his eyes!’ It was my spirit guide or providence or whatever you want to call it, but I was curled up in the fetal position when I heard those words. I heard that voice and I started kicking and screaming like a wild animal — and by the way, use your thumbs when you go for the eyes.”

Melson, who now is a black belt in taekwondo, said she later learned that Bailey was beating her with the drywall ax, busting her cheekbone and bruising her lungs with the hammered end, with the various resulting wounds covering her body in blood.

“I know I slammed the door on him — he tried to bite my fingers off — and I remember him standing there,” Melson continued. “He is a black man and it was dark so it was hard to see him but I remember him standing there with the ax in his hands.

“Just pure evil — I can totally picture that.”

The fifth-wheel was on 10 acres so no neighbors were nearby to hear her screams; no one heard her — “except probably Andrew,” she choked — so she took off running, barefooted and in pajamas, down a gravel road that she recalls was “light, because the gravel was light (in color), so I could see the road.”

“I could hear him coming after me, so I picked up a really big rock — I have no idea what I intended to do with it — and kept running. Then I heard him fall and I finally made it out to the paved road,” she said, drawing another deep breath.

The first car lights that approached, Melson said, caused her to panic,

thinking somehow it was Bailey.

“So I ‘Super-manned’ into the brush, I went flying!” she spread her arms and demonstrated her stance of sheer terror. The car passed, then she found herself retching in the bushes, her body trying to purge the poisonous fear. By now, it was well after 6 a.m.

“I went to the first neighbor I saw and huddled at their door, saying help me, he tried to kill me, help me. They didn’t let me in but they called 911 then I went to the next neighbors, Diane and Brad Moser — and God bless them,” said Melson.

The Mosers helped her get out of her ammonia-soaked shirt as she kept telling them, “My baby is 2 1/2 and my baby’s there! He’s there! He’s going to kill him!”

By now, five volunteer firefighters and medics already were on scene, but the fifth-wheel and property were not secured until El Dorado County sheriff’s officers arrived about 20 minutes later, so no approach had been made.

“I kept telling them he’s going to kill my baby and I kept telling them I was terrified he was going to find me and kill me,” said Melson.

At one point, she added, Brad Moser fetched “a great big shotgun” from somewhere in the couple’s house and assured her that Bailey would not be able to get past him, to her.

What she didn’t know at the time, however, is that Bailey had already taken Andrew and left in a vehicle that later would be found shortly before his arrest in Sonora, Tuolumne County. She didn’t know yet that her angelic little Andrew would die at the hands of his father, her child’s body found lying behind the Kmart store in Martell with more than 50 stab wounds to his head and throat.

Support

Melson said in addition to the Mosers, she recalls the kindness of the late Melissa Meekma, then a sheriff’s deputy.

“She and Andrew shared the same birthdate, May 24 — hers in 1980 and his in 2005,” she said. “Melissa’s family and I are good friends now. She was the light to my day, that day.”

Melson said sheriff’s detective Mike Lensing also performed his job with exemplary care and professionalism, telling her details about the horror unfolding even though others shielded her, apparently thinking she couldn’t take the truth just yet.

“He was amazing for me, understanding that I *had* to know some things in order to start processing it, getting through it.”

Another heroine that day was Cathy Karabinus, her cousin who managed to track down Melson’s parents at New Melones reservoir (“She’s like a bloodhound!”) and coming to her aid immediately.

“I remember calling Cathy and I told her I was sorry to bother her at work but that he had just tried to kill me and Andrew was missing,” said Melson. “She came running. She has proven to me that she will go above and beyond.”

Another person who came through in her terrible time of need was Scott Layton from Chapel of the Pines, which charged Melson only their cost for all funeral needs to lay Andrew to his final rest in Westwood Memorial Park in Placerville.

And about that grave — Melson said she thoroughly regrets that the name “Bailey” is on her tiny’s son’s grave marker and she vows that one day she will correct that situation, not having any trace of the killer connected with Andrew’s memory if at all possible.

“I call him ‘Murderer’ and he will always be only that to me — Murderer,” she said.

Charles Bailey is in state prison now, serving two life sentences with no possibility of parole after being convicted in El Dorado County Superior Court. He was arrested after a woman friend whom he called while fleeing kept him on the phone long enough for her boyfriend to use another phone to alert authorities; the call was traced to a phone booth at a gas station in Sonora, where Bailey was nailed with a taser and taken into custody.

Merrily Melson said she also would like to acknowledge the efforts of Pat and Sharon Barron, who this year held the 10th annual “Kacie’s Ride for Hope,” filling Placerville’s Main Street with Harleys and other motorcycles to make a memorial run in honor of Kacie Barron, Pat’s sister who was slain by her ex-boyfriend in a domestic violence tragedy. The latest ride occurred on Saturday, Sept. 12.

“When she heard about my case in 2008, Sharon told Pat, ‘Find her!’ and they did, coming to me and wanting to dedicate the ride that year to Andrew,” said Melson, taking her baby’s photo from the wall and holding it tight. “I spoke during the event and it was very emotional.

“I know they are going through some stuff right now, with Sharon’s health and I want them to know my heart is with them.”

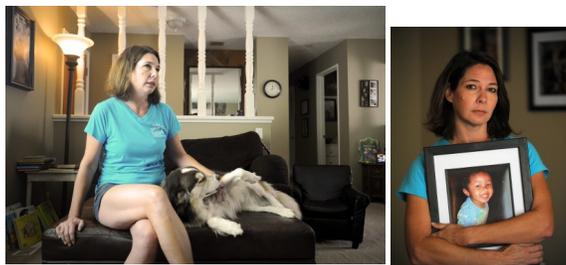
Melson added that she hopes those who see “Finding Jenn’s Voice” at Signature Theater on Wednesday, Sept. 23 will recognize in their own lives the “red flags” that she so tragically missed.

For tickets go to “finding jenn’s voice” online and click on “screenings.”

“I learned that this kind of murderer, he is a ‘type,’ a person where power and control is all they are about,” she said. “I also learned that there are resources out there for people like me, for victims. At first I felt like I was the only person on top of the highest, lonely hill in the world.

“I learned that I wasn’t alone.”

What she has learned, too, is one more of life’s most important lessons, reflected in her eyes as she held Andrew’s picture: Love, like that of a mother for her lost little boy, is forever.



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Pat Lakey

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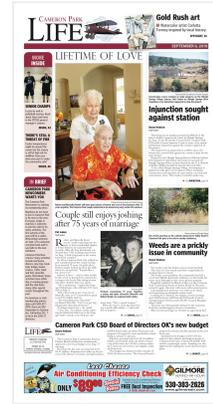
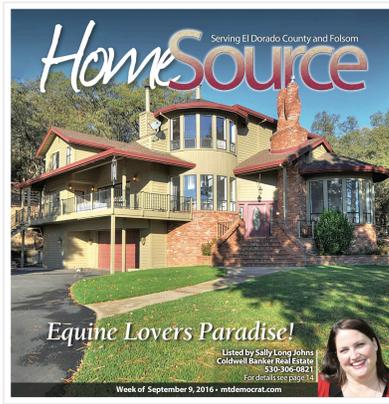
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Latrobe grad's documentary explores intimate partner violence



Submitted

Tracy Schott, a graduate of Greater Latrobe High School and Penn State University, spent 15 years as a social worker before deciding to pursue a career in telecommunications.

By Matt Faye

Tuesday, June 23, 2015, 8:12 p.m.

Updated 14 hours ago

After years of working with families as a social worker, a Latrobe native is using filmmaking to raise awareness about intimate partner violence.

Tracy Schott, 56, a graduate of Greater Latrobe High School and Penn State University, spent 15 years as a social worker before deciding it was time for a change.

"The other side of my brain needed work; I was always a writer," she said. "To me, it's always about finding, telling and engaging in the story. I'm interested in motivating peoples' hearts."

Schott, who lives in Reading, is set to release her first

If you go

What: "Finding Jenn's Voice" documentary showing

When: 4:30 p.m. Saturday

Where: Pittsburgh Independent Film Festival in the Father Ryan Arts Center, 420 Chartiers Ave., McKees Rocks

Tickets: One-day pass, \$10; two-day pass, \$15; three-day festival pass, \$20

Website: www.pghindie.com/Tickets.html

documentary, "Finding Jenn's Voice," on Saturday at the Pittsburgh Independent Film Festival.

The film is the story of Jennifer Snyder, 27, of Allentown, who was murdered in 2011 by her boyfriend on learning she was pregnant.

The concept for the film originated with Snyder's aunt, Trina Angelovich-Rothrock, who requested that Schott make a documentary on the issue. Schott at first had doubts about the idea.

"My first thought was: 'Oh, a documentary? That is going to be hard to sell,'" she said. "But then I did some research."

Homicide is the leading cause of death of women during pregnancy, according to a study by Dr. Isabelle Horon of the Maryland Department of Health. The study, published in 2001 in the Journal of the American Medical Association, was one of many sources Schott used during filming.

She also interviewed some of the top experts on the subject in the country, including researchers from Johns Hopkins and Rutgers universities.

Through fundraisers and donations, she raised about \$85,000 to make the film, but fell drastically short of its \$300,000 budget. Schott said she and her staff worked without pay for more than two years.

"I think Tracy and her staff did an outstanding job. Not only did they put in their time and money, they put in their hearts," Angelovich-Rothrock said. "They lived it, they breathed it, they truly embraced the film. I feel very blessed that they would do this for Jenn."

Angelovich-Rothrock said that although the film was very difficult for both her as well as all of Snyder's family, she hopes it will help others recognize the signs of abuse and get help before it's too late.

Schott interviewed 11 women throughout the course of the film, all of whom had experienced intimate partner violence in some capacity.

Using the skills acquired in her earlier occupation, she believes the film can make a difference.

"I felt like I was a social worker again," she said. "These 11 women have gone from victims to survivors to advocates."

With the completion of such a grueling project, Schott said, she would like to do something different for her next film.

"The next project is going to be something fun," she said. "This project has been very emotional for everyone."

Matt Faye is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at mfaye@tribweb.com.

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THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

<http://www.austinchronicle.com/screens/2015-10-16/a-hidden-epidemic/>

A Hidden Epidemic

Finding Jenn's Voice illuminates a disturbing trend

BY SARAH MARLOFF, OCTOBER 16, 2015, SCREENS

Homicide is the leading cause of death for pregnant women, and Tracy Schott's recently released documentary, *Finding Jenn's Voice*, seeks to shed a much-needed spotlight on this extreme act of intimate partner violence. For the film, Schott armed herself with a two-part mission: to tell one victim's story, and to convince audiences that domestic violence is real. "It's happening right next door in many cases," sums up Schott.

In March of 2011, Jennifer Snyder – known as Jenn by her friends and family – learned she was pregnant with her boyfriend David Rapoport's baby. After finding out, Rapoport shot Jenn twice in the mouth, doused her in bleach, wrapped her in trash bags, and dumped her body in a nearby ravine. Jenn was 27.

Schott, a Pennsylvania-based social worker-turned-filmmaker, learned of the murder through Jenn's aunt, Trina. Following Jenn's murder, the media seemed hell-bent on slandering the girl, and Trina hoped that Schott would be interested in telling Jenn's side of the story. Initially Schott was hesitant – what was the larger theme behind this heartbreaking story? But after a few moments on Google, Schott had her answer.

"It quickly came up that homicide is the leading cause of death during pregnancy," says Schott. "I wasn't deep into research mode, I was just Googling 'death' and 'pregnancy.' It upset me so much. At the time I didn't know we were really talking about domestic violence. I just knew the media wasn't covering this, and it dawned on me that I had the skill set to do this." Having spent her "previous" life as a social worker and child/family therapist, she knew she'd approach the subject matter from a critical angle.

And thus began the next four years of Schott's life. *Finding Jenn's Voice* is a 72-minute journey into intimate partner homicide and the psychology behind the perpetrators of these horrendous crimes. By the time the film arrived in the editing room, Schott had over 100 hours of footage, including interviews with doctors, professors, psychologists, and criminal justice experts. Additionally, 11 women survivors of attempted homicide are featured in the film, complementing Jenn's story.

"I chose these 11 because each of them has a piece of information that connects to Jenn," explains Schott.

"Their stories are important to hear, and I also wanted to show the diversity of people impacted by domestic violence."

Some punches can't be held, and this movie packs one hell of a right hook. For all of October, which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, *Finding Jenn's Voice* will be screening across the country. Schott hopes to get the film 1,000 screenings over the next six months – and not for the recognition.

"In the U.S., three women are murdered every day by their partners," states Schott, explaining the importance behind *Finding Jenn's Voice*. "Intimate partner homicide is a huge problem in this country. So frequently we look at femicide in other cultures with horror, but – it's not so good here either."

Due to the traumatizing subject matter, Schott chose to release the documentary through Gathr Films so that people could watch en masse for support. "Every screening is followed by a conversation because that's where the power of film lies: Get as many people in a room watching [the film], and then they go talk to people who weren't in the room, and that's how awareness spreads."

Gretta Gardner, chair of the Austin/Travis County Family Violence Task Force and Family Violence Director for the Justice Planning Department, will sit on the panel following Austin's screening to discuss IPV.

Finding Jenn's Voice premieres in Austin Oct. 19, 7:30pm, at the Alamo South Lamar. Tickets can be purchased in advance through Gathr Films at www.gathr.us/screening/12944.

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HeartSong Therapy: Erica Randolph MA LPCC NCC

Psychotherapeutic services with Erica May Randolph MA LPCC NCC



APRIL 21, 2016

Finding Jenn's Voice

Share the joy

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Last night I had the opportunity to go to the [Albuquerque Film Fest's](#) screening of ['Finding Jenn's Voice'](#).



film maker Tracy Schott at the
Abq Film Festival

The movie highlights the fact that homicide is the leading cause of death during pregnancy!
Did you know that?

Please take the time to watch the movie, watch the [trailer](#), go to the website, and add your voice to make societal changes in your community! Support your local shelters, SANE nurses, crisis hotlines: find out how you can help create and be the change in your community by adding your voice.

Your voice is important!

The screening was followed by a round table discussion with the film maker and several prominent activists against domestic violence and sexual assault in the state of New Mexico.

The panel discussion following the film included:

- Lynn GentryWood – Executive Director, DVRC (Domestic Violence Resource Center)
- Gail Starr – Clinical Coordinator, Albuquerque SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners)
- Antoinette Sedillo Lopez – Executive Director, Enlace
- Kay Bounkeua, MPH – Executive Director, New Mexico Asian Family Center
- Alexandria Taylor, MPA – Executive Director, Valencia Shelter Services
- Rosemary Traub, JD – Albuquerque Family Advocacy Center

Lending their support to the movie, several prominent experts in the field contributed their knowledge to the film. From the [website](#):

Jacquelyn Campbell, PhD, MSN – Professor of Nursing, Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Campbell is a national leader in research and advocacy in the field of intimate partner violence. Her studies paved the way for a growing body of interdisciplinary investigations by researchers in the disciplines of nursing, medicine, and public health. She is the current Chair of the Board of Directors for the [Futures without Violence](#). She was also a member of the congressionally appointed U.S. Department of Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence

Diana Cheng, MD – Obstetrician/Gynecologist, Director of Women’s Health, Maryland Dept. of Health and Medical Hygiene. Dr. Cheng and Dr. Isabelle Horon’s 2001 landmark study found homicide to be the leading cause of death among pregnant women. Dr. Cheng is the former vice-chair of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Committee on Healthcare for Underserved Women, and is a leader in the movement to encourage IPV screening by physicians.

Rae Taylor, PhD – Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, Loyola University – New Orleans. Dr. Taylor dissertation examined pregnancy as a risk factor for intimate partner violence, and has researched the media’s coverage of intimate partner violence. Dr. Taylor is also a trained advocate for victims in the criminal justice system.

Linda Burke-Galloway, MD – Obstetrician/Gynecologist, Social Worker, Author – “The Smart Woman’s Guide to Pregnancy”. Dr. Burke-Galloway is a board certified OB/Gyn and public health advocate working with underserved populations.

Marcus Kondkar, PhD – Chair, Associate Professor-Sociology, Loyola University – New Orleans. Dr. Kondkar has researched Intimate Partner Homicide, Gender Violence, and Sexual Coercion.

David Adams, PhD – CoFounder/CoDirector EMERGE – the first counseling program for men who abuse women, founded in 1977. He is the author of “Why do they Kill? Men who murder their intimate partners”.

Evan Stark, PhD, MSW – Professor Emeritus, Rutgers University – sociologist, forensic social worker and author of “Coercive Control: How men entrap women in personal life”, and “Women at Risk: Domestic violence and women’s health” (co-author – Anne Flitcraft).d Professor of Public Health, Rutgers University. Dr. Stark is a forensic soc

Marilee Strong – An award-winning journalist who specializes in reporting on psychological and social issues. She is the author of “Erased: Missing Women, Murdered Wives”, and followed the Scott and Laci Peterson case for five years.

Janine Latus – A freelance writer, radio commentator and speaker, Janie is the author of “If I am Missing or Dead”, a book which describes the murder of her sister, and the culture of abuse in which she grew up. The book has been on the New York Times Bestseller and republished in half a dozen languages.

here is a photo of the amazing, intelligent, activist women who attended:



Roundtable discussion Finding Jenn's
Voice

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HeartSong Therapy

September 3 at 10:18am

This second kind of boundary cross is the covert kind, what my friend Martin calls 'the unmaking.'

This is when you (consciously or unconsciously) use deception, undermining, prevarication, manipulation, or dishonesty when you want access to someone's body, or want them to serve some sexual or romantic purpose for you (sex, adventure, excitement, ego boost, status), rather than engaging with them in an emotionally honest way as a

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