



California Newsreel | Contributed photo
A young mother holds her new baby, who was born prematurely only weighing two pounds, in 'When the Bough Breaks' a film that explores the effect of racism on our health.

Film fest aims to share birthing options

By Nancy Raskauskas
The Entertainer

Birth network hosts 'When the Bough Breaks' and group discussion

CORVALLIS — “We as a culture know so little about childbirth,” Melissa Cheyney said. “Any other culture, by the time you go in to have your own baby you’ve been to the birth of all of your family members and others in your community — you have a very grounded knowledge of what to expect.”

Cheyney, who is professor of medical anthropology and reproductive biology at Oregon State University and also a midwife, heads up the Reproductive Health Lab in Waldo Hall and works in health advocacy.

She is a co-leader of the Heart of the Valley Birth Network, a group that was born out of interest in the film, “Business of Being Born,” which was screened to a large crowd on the OSU campus last year.

The group helps educate prospective parents about childbirth options.

“Part of doing that was coming together around issues of making birth safer and making it a more positive experience for women and babies in our community,”

Cheyney said. “We talk about doulas and midwives and birth centers and hospital birth and try to let people know what their options are.”

“Heart of the Valley Birth Network is dedicated to promoting mother-friendly maternity care in our community,” agreed co-leader Jenney Lee. “This year our main activity is focused on a film festival featuring five films about pregnancy, birth and maternity care in our country.”

“One of our group’s first major activities has been writing a Lamaze International grant in which we were successful at getting it to fund this film series,” Cheyney said.

“Several of the films we will be screening have been getting a lot of attention in the national media,” Lee said. ABC’s “20/20” recently ran a piece featuring two of the films “The Business of Being Born” and “Orgasmic Birth.”

“Orgasmic Birth” was the first film in the series, and was shown in November at Darkside Cinema and the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library.

The next film “When the Bough Breaks” will be co-sponsored by the Health Equity Alliance. The film deals with issues of health and social inequality and is actually a segment of a longer documentary series called “Unnatural Causes” that explores questions such as why a well-educated black woman is more likely to have a premature baby than a poorly educated white woman.

“For my field of research, which is maternal health, I think ‘When the Bough Breaks’ does a great job,” Cheyney said.

“When the Bough Breaks” will be shown at noon, Wednesday, Jan. 14, in the Memorial Union at Oregon State University; at 7:45 p.m. Thursday, Jan 15, at Darkside Cinema (Admission: \$5); and at 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 18, in the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library. Each showing will be followed by a group discussion.

Three other films focused on birth will be shown throughout the Spring.

“Each of our films will be screened three times in the community, to reach the broadest possible audience,” Lee said.

NATURAL BIRTH FILM FESTIVAL

“When the Bough Breaks,” movie screening and discussion, noon, Wednesday, Jan. 14, Memorial Union, Oregon State University; 7:45 p.m. Thursday, Jan 15, at (Darkside Cinema. Admission: \$5; and 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 18, Corvallis-Benton County Public Library. Co-Sponsored by the Health Equity Alliance.

Upcoming films

- March 4-8: “A Doula Story” &

“It’s My Body, My Baby, My Birth”

- May 6-10: “Pregnant in America”

- July 9-12: “Business of Being Born”

Information: www.valleybirthnetwork.org.