

# **TRUTHS ABOUT HEROIN: New documentary film rivets region before release**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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Ashley Seering and Cory Byers' new documentary film, "The Heroin Project," is riveting the region before its release and she hopes it will eventually change lives and prevent addiction to the often-fatal drug.

The heroin documentary will be released in late April or early May, Seering said.

"It is heartbreaking to hear the different stories and how some of the people are at a dead end, and don't know what to do," she said.

The documentary is now about an hour long, Seering said, and has continued to evolve.

"I had no idea what to expect," she said when she started promotion of the documentary. "Most projects I do are small scale and I have never done anything directed at a wider audience. I am surprised how much people have contacted me and how many families have been affected by drug addiction. It is an issue that really needs attention."

She said this project has led her to work on follow up projects on heroin addiction.

"I was asked to do videos on a treatment center and be more in depth," she said. "I want to get it out to people and every week it does evolve a bit."

Seering said she was appreciative of the Madison County Coroner's Office, the Madison County State's Attorney's office and Troy Police for their help in her documentary. She also cited Troy detective Chris Coyne for his assistance with the film.



“When I started talking with families, they brought up Chris a lot,” Seering said. “Chris was a big help. The documentary is made up of interviews and done with some recreations of true stories that have involved heroin. We used real police officers and used the actual coroner (Steve Nonn).”

The documentary film maker said when she was a student at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, she kept hearing about the heroin issue over and over again. The Madison County Heroin Task Force meets once a month in Edwardsville and she started attending the meetings.

“I asked if I could record the meeting and put them on You Tube and hear what people had to say,” she said. “When I started getting close to graduation, I started looking for my next big project, so I chose this. It is for a really good cause and I can use my storytelling abilities to help raise awareness on the issue.”

Byers said he worked with Madison County State’s Attorney Tom Gibbons and Steve Jankowski (SIUE Alumni Affairs Director) on another heroin project a few years back and came up with some anti-drug PSAs written by local high school students.

“As we were developing those ideas, Ashley had the idea to do a more in-depth documentary about the heroin problem,” he said. “The problem won’t get better without as many people as possible becoming aware of the problem. If we can raise awareness, hopefully more people will get involved and make things better.”

Byers said he had learned a lot on the project.

“It was surprising to learn how inexpensive and easy to get and ingest heroin is,” he said. “Like a lot of people, I’ve always known ‘drugs are bad,’ but you don’t really understand the toll it takes until you talk to people whose lives have been directly impacted by it.”

Once the documentary is officially released, there will be public screenings, Seering said.

“In the next couple of weeks, we will send out a public screenings schedule,” she said. “We have received some funding from the Madison County Licensed Beverage Association and we have an IndieGoGo Campaign going until the end of March hoping to raise funds. We want to be able to distribute the documentary for free with the funding.”

For Seering, her biggest hope is that people pay attention to the documentary and learn from it.

“Hopefully people will take what they see to heart and get motivated to do something about it,” she said of heroin addiction. I put my heart and soul into the project and I have received so much good feedback. I hope it spearheads a substantial change and actually means something.”

