'Ice': TV stations sign on for film

FROM PAGE E1

KGMB-9, as well as PBS-Hawai'i-11, are considering the August airing. The PBS station also has committed to host a half-hour "town hall" discussion after the screening. Other stations may pick up that feed or present their own discussions afterward, Lee said.

"The cooperation exhibited by Hawai'i's major network affiliates agreeing to a prime-time simulcast makes us proud to be part of this industry," said Lee, who is known for her reflective films on paniolo, Papakōlea and Waikīkī.

She said the worsening ice crisis in Hawai'i was a challenge she had to acknowledge and investigate.

"The purpose of the film is to show how arts and entertainment can be used as an educational tool, too, for the entire public. If we can call attention — and TV is the best medium — to provide valuable information to help enforcement, and show how the private sector can get involved, we'll have succeeded," she said.

"It's often thought of as a problem only for the government or en-

ABOUT NARCONON

What is Narconon?

Narconon — which comes from two Greek words (narco meaning drugs and non meaning no) — is an international drug rehabilitation and education program based on research by L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology. It is a secular, drug-free model of rehabilitation that does not employ drugs, pharmaceuticals or mind-altering substances as part of the recovery process.

How did Narconon start?

The Narconon program was founded in 1966 by William Benitez, who was an inmate of Arizona State Prison. While searching for a way to kick his heroin addiction, Benitez came across Hubbard's book, "The Fundamentals of Thought" in the prison library. He started a pilot drug rehab program in the prison. It has grown to more than 100 rehab and prevention centers around the world today, according to the nonprofit's Web site.

How is Narconon linked to Scientology?

Narconon uses the philosophy and findings of Hubbard but remains financially separate from the Church of Scientology, according to Clark Carr, president of Narconon International.

Drugs

CONTINUED FROM E1

It took Preston years to realize that drugs were holding her back from reaching her goals and fully experiencing life.

"I never knew food could taste so good, that I could be this happy," said Preston, who used the principles taught by Narconon to kick her habit. "From that moment my career took off."

In 2003, Preston, who most recently starred with Kurt Russell in "Sky High," saw Edgy Lee's documentary "Ice: Hawai'i's Crystal Meth Epidemic." She had no idea about the drug problem back home.

"It broke my heart," said Preston, who graduated from Punahou School in 1980. "The stories I heard about meth breaking up families ... I really felt that if we all got together, if everybody came together, we could turn Hawai'i around."

Last year Preston, who is married to actor John Travolta, helped found Narconon Hawai'i to educate youths and parents about the dangers of drugs.

Narconon International, based in Los Angeles, plans to open at least one adult rehabilitation facility on O'ahu this year. The goal is to establish more than a dozen centers across the state.

"I want to turn this completely around," Preston said. "The sky's the limit."

Right now, though, the focus is on education and awareness.

"We want to help parents get in better communication with their kids on this subject," said Clark Carr, president of Narconon International. "You can't overstate that. It's not a situation until it's a screaming situation."

The Narconon program isn't without its critics.

The program is based on the principles of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard. Though the programs are not financially linked, some wonder whether this is yet another ploy to recruit members.

For example, in 2004, school district officials in Los Angeles ordered a review of Narconon's prevention and education program, which reaches thousands of students in at least 20 California districts. Last February, the state investigation concluded that the program failed to "reflect accurate, widely accepted medical and scientific evidence."

But what makes the Narconon drug education program effective with young people is its emphasis on telling the often harsh truth about drugs through real-life testimonials, said Julie Halpern, director of student services at Mid-Pacific Institute.

"What they respond to the most is someone giving personal testimony about overcoming adversity," Halpern said. "That's what they like about Narconon."

The students at Mid-Pac also responded to Preston's local roots and celebrity status.

"She's from Hawai'i, too, so it really hits home," said Sadie Ontkean, 18, from Diamond Head. "I think about everything that I want to do and where I want to go and none of that has to do with drugs ... I don't want to waste my time."

ON THE WEB

- www.drug-free-kids.org (for your free kit, call (866) 373-2809)
- teens.drugabuse.gov
- www.theantidrug.com
- www.nida.nih.gov
- www.drugfree.org
- www.health.org
- www.freevibe.com
- www.narcononhawaii.org

DEBORAH BOOKER | The Honolulu Advertiser

Punahou graduate Kelly Preston said that at 15, "I tried (marijuana), I loved it and I was hooked."

Ontkean

Davis

Mafua

Elorin Joy Davis, a 17-year-old from Hawai'i Kai with Broadway aspirations, knows the dangers of drugs and doesn't want any part of it.

"I think of myself being in that same place," said Davis, who shares birth dates with Preston. "But God is my extreme strength."

For Dani Mafua, drugs would interfere with her short-term goal: playing volleyball at the University of Hawai'i.

"I'm an athlete, so I already know what my body can and cannot take," said the 17-year-old from Kapolei. "(Drugs) will only take a toll on my body. And I've got so much ahead of me."

Reach Catherine E. Toth at ctoth@honoluluadvertiser.com or 535-4103.

Filmmaker Lee focuses efforts on 'ice' in Hawai'i

By Wayne Harada
ADVERTISER ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Alarmed by the worsening crystal methamphetamine epidemic in the Islands, Edgy Lee, the award-winning documentary filmmaker, has started work on a new film that will put a face on the problem.

EDGY LEE

And she's got Hawai'i's broadcast media on her side: The five local affiliate stations have agreed to simultaneously show the film in an unprecedented commercial-free prime-time screening in August.

Titled "Hawai'i's Ice Epidemic," the program will examine the scope of methamphetamine or "ice" abuse and offer ways communities can help combat the devastation it causes.

Though the precise time and date are uncertain, KHON-2, KITV-4, KHNL-8 and

See 'ICE,' E3

SECTION E

Island Life

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ABOUT WOMEN

Theft dirty part of life in paradise

Stopping the scourge of DRUG ABUSE

Local girl Kelly Preston on a mission to 'turn Hawai'i around'

Souther power sets tone on 'Idol'

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HAWA

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Star-powered anti-drug blitz

Actress Kelly Preston is on a mission to 'turn Hawai'i around'

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Making case with logo

Hurricane kit urg despite mild fore

BY DERRICK DEPLEDGE
Advertiser Government Writer

Two to three tropical cyclones could move through the central Pacific over the next several months, a forecast that is slightly below average but still potentially dangerous for Hawai'i.

The federal government's Central Pacific Hurricane Center in Honolulu released its prediction yesterday along with a reminder for people to have an emergency evacuation plan and a week's supply of food, water, medicine and other necessities ready in case of a violent storm. The hurricane season runs from June through No

Historically, fo ical cyclones occu Pacific during hur

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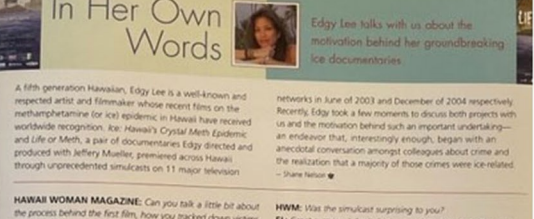

In Her Own Words

Edgy Lee talks with us about the motivation behind her groundbreaking ice documentaries

A fifth generation Hawaiian, Edgy Lee is a well-known and respected artist and filmmaker whose recent films on the methamphetamine (or ice) epidemic in Hawaii have received worldwide recognition. *Ice: Hawaii's Crystal Meth Epidemic* and *Life or Meth*, a pair of documentaries Edgy directed and produced with Jeffery Mueller, premiered across Hawaii through unprecedented simulcasts on 11 major television networks in June of 2003 and December of 2004 respectively. Recently, Edgy took a few moments to discuss both projects with us and the motivation behind such an important undertaking—an endeavor that, interestingly enough, began with an anecdotal conversation amongst colleagues about crime and the realization that a majority of those crimes were ice-related. – Shane Nelson

HAWAII WOMAN MAGAZINE: *Can you talk a little bit about the process behind the first film, how you tracked down victims, experts, the people who were actually in the film?*

EDGY LEE: Well, it was word of mouth. There are people, hundreds of people, that—quietly—have been fighting the meth problem in Hawaii. From law enforcement, educators, to people in the health field—many people in the health field. People that work at HS, people who work in their communities with grass roots organizations that are started in somebody's living room. ...The bottom line is, anecdotally at least, when you're talking about the neighborhoods all over the state of Hawaii, from Hana, Maui to Kahu, Big Island, to Waimea, Kauai, to Kahala and Honolulu, you are going to get stories that are rampant. Somebody's child, somebody's uncle, somebody's neighbor, somebody's coworker, somebody's employee. This problem has been with us for almost two generations but no one really wanted to address it, or rather people have been fighting quietly to try and do what they could, but never in a cohesive community effort and that's what we need.

HWM: *So the creation of the film itself was a way to increase awareness about the ice problem?*

EL: Well, what could we do in our industry? Our job is to document the world around us. This is what's going on around us whether we like or not, or whether our very good friends in the travel industry want us to talk about it or not, it's our obligation. That's what we do. So what do the GMs at the television stations do? They're responsible for making sure that this community sees reflections of itself on locally produced programming. And they came up to bat. ...We all know, those of us who have been studying this, that the problem is very deep rooted in our community.

HWM: *Can you talk a little bit about the simulcast? Was that something you planned from the beginning?*

EL: No, we really didn't think about it. We work from our gut. This is something that certainly we knew was not going to be a top draw for us, but we were going to do it just for our own satisfaction. And when we realized that no one was addressing the problem and when we realized just how bad the problem really is, that's when we said, "OK, a simulcast is really needed. We really need everybody to see this, whether they like it or not. And how are we going to do that. Well if it's on TV, on all the stations, they kind of have no choice." And those GM's doing that is historical.

HWM: *Was the simulcast surprising to you?*

EL: Great surprise. I don't think any other state can claim that their top stations, 11 stations the first time and I think eight the second, came on aboard to simulcast a drug film about their community. Especially a place where tourism is its driving economic force. That takes guts. And it cost them a pretty penny.

HWM: *What was the reaction to these films on the Mainland? Was there a worldwide reaction?*

EL: Yes. The first film was simulcast in Guam. And the governor and the first lady introduced the film and Mrs. Comacho publicly stated that she had experienced methamphetamine addiction in her own family with one of her siblings. The film has been seen all across the country. We get emails nearly every day. It's been taken by the US attorney's office nationwide. The Prosecutor's office nationwide. It's been seen and distributed by the US armed forces. The other day Jeffrey did a presentation of the film for 1,200 marines on their way to be shipped out, because there is a problem with meth in the military. ...It's been seen by a lot of people.

HWM: *What's the next step? How can your projects continue to make an impact?*

EL: You know, one of the things that film can do or video can do is open up subjects that may not be readily talked freely about in public nor in your home. Everybody's used to watching TV. Every kid knows what this is all about. It's the medium of our millennium. When you put on a video that addresses meth in the work place, which is what he [Jeffrey Mueller] is working on, specific to that workplace, even if you reach just one person, you might be able to change some lives.

Film and video allow people to talk about it without talking about it. Viewing people who are in the same predicament as they are. Let's take film. We are about to do a film on elderly abuse connected to methamphetamines. It's that bad. When we show these films to a group of elderly people, they may not have had the courage to talk about it freely out of fear or just shame. Now they can look at others talking to them directly on film that are in the same situation that can help them identify ways in which to solve the problem they are in. ...That's how film and video can do more than just entertain people.