

# Documentary looks into polygamy

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A new documentary film, "Banking on Heaven," takes an in-depth look at Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint communities which practice polygamy in Hildale and Colorado City, Ariz.

Premiering last week at the Vancouver International Film Festival in Canada, the documentary received positive public response and was sold out for all three of its screenings, said Helen Yagi, spokeswoman for the festival. Producer Laurie Allen hopes to eventually release the film in Utah and Arizona, the homes of the two largest fundamentalists communities.

The film's goal is to raise awareness of the problems associated with the polygamist sect located in Arizona, Utah and British Columbia, said Allen, who not only produced, but wrote and narrated the documentary.

Allen will donate a portion of the money made by the film to supporting victims of polygamy.

"We know a lot of women and children would leave the FLDS church if they knew they had help on the outside," Allen said.

Help on the outside includes long-term programs to house, educate and provide counseling for those leaving the fundamentalist sect.

Besides helping victims of polygamy once they have left,

getting people to leave the polygamist sect may prove to be the real challenge.

The solution to polygamy does not come from arrests, Allen said. She believes the solution lies in holding the schools in these areas to the education standards of the United States.

"If we get the children educated it's going to stop polygamy," Allen said.

Allen herself escaped from a polygamist group at age 16. After graduating from film school in 2004, Allen decided to create a film based on the fundamentalist sect.

Allen interviewed Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff and members of his staff for the documentary.

The Attorney General's Office has not yet seen the film but hopes it will help people, said Paul Murphy, spokesman for the office.

Allen praised efforts by Shurtleff to help members of polygamous communities.

The Attorney General's Office is doing two things to help victims of polygamy, Murphy said. The first is to prosecute crimes within the communities, primarily those involving women, children and fraud.

"We have taken this position to tackle most serious crimes and help the most vulnerable victims," Murphy said.

Second, the Attorney General's Office is combining efforts with other organizations to provide a Safety Net Committee. This committee helps those leaving polygamy and looks for

**ways to provide information to victims inside the communities.**

**"I've been amazed that we've had so much success so quickly," Murphy said. "But I'm also in awe of how much still needs to be done.**

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