

## HEALTH

### Mothers overcome battles in documentary



By Trevor Terfloth, Chatham Daily News  
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The documentary 'Recovering Love' was screened at Chatham-Kent Children's Services recently. Shown is director and producer Laura Sky, centre, along with two mothers who battled addictions, Grace Good, left, and Annie Akavak. (TREVOR TERFLOTH, The Chatham Daily News)

Two Toronto mothers who faced an uphill fight against substance abuse brought their touching stories to Chatham recently.

Annie Akavak and Grace Good were on hand for the screening of *Recovering Love* at Chatham-Kent Children's Services last week, with workers from various social service sectors attending.

Chatham-Kent Community Health Centres, Chatham-Kent Employment and Social Services were also involved.

The documentary, created by Toronto-based Skyworks Charitable Foundation, discussed the prejudices, as well and personal and societal challenges, that addicts encounter as they work to keep their families together.

"I needed someone with an open mind and non-judgmental, and willing to help and understand," Akavak said. "It was really hard. Definitely something where I needed to have someone support me and help me build up my confidence."

Akavak, 32, and Good, 24, took part in a program at the Jean Tweed Centre in Toronto, which offers drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Both are now pursuing post-secondary education.

Good said there are still many stigmas associated with addictions, particularly concerning mothers, and believes many people often don't wait to give them a chance to turn their lives around.

If she found herself in a position to counsel a mother in a similar position, Good said she would be welcoming, and also stressed that every situation is unique.

"I would listen to their story and basically have an open discussion," she said.

Two screenings were held, with clips of the documentary shown in between question-and-answer sessions.

Director and producer Laura Sky, who founded Skyworks, said she had to challenge her own prejudices.

"Some women who are struggling with addiction issues are actually at the same time extremely committed moms. And they love their children she said. "The women in the film talk about that struggle in a way that shows us they really deserve our support."

Akavak said it's easy for someone to simply say quit drugs or alcohol, but believes the problem usually runs much deeper and requires constant effort.

She said her children are a big motivation, noting success also depends on personal well-being.

"Love yourself -- you're a beautiful being," she said. "If you're having hard times, just get help, get the support you need.

"There's so many critics out there. You don't need to critique yourself. Just get healthy."

For more information, visit [www.skyworksfoundation.org](http://www.skyworksfoundation.org)

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