

# Film traces real-life story of abortion 'survivor'

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(RNS) A new movie confronts a controversial topic by highlighting two words that don't typically go together: "abortion" and "survivor."

"We didn't know there was such a thing," said Jon Erwin, who wrote and co-directed "October Baby" with his brother, Andrew.

The film, the latest in a recent string of Christian-themed movies, opens Friday (March 23) and has broken into Hollywood despite rejection at first by many studios.

The movie tells the story of Hannah, a 19-year-old college student who finds out that she not only is adopted, but she is a survivor of a failed abortion attempt, which explains why she has been suffering from health problems all her life.

Hannah, played by newcomer Rachel Hendrix, journeys to find her birth mother and explore her own identity as she learns the power of forgiveness and love.

The inspiration for the movie came when the Christian filmmakers heard an abortion survivor named Gianna Jessen speak at an event. "We were just moved and inspired by her story. We knew we needed to do something," Erwin said.

The film, shot in four weeks on a tight budget in the producer's home state of Alabama, includes lessons of honor, sacrifice, love -- and some humor, too, said Erwin.

"People respond to these virtues no matter what," he added. "They ultimately come from Jesus, but we display them for what they are, which we hope is appealing to people."

Erwin, who was raised in the anti-abortion movement, hopes the faith virtues built into the film do not "alienate anybody."

Since most Hollywood studios rejected the film, anti-abortion and Christian organizations stepped in to fund it -- something the director hopes "makes a loud statement and makes others notice."

Focus on the Family, the Colorado-based Christian ministry, is one of the film's supporters.

"The movie does a beautiful job of revealing two things: The dignity and value of every human life and the beauty of adoption," said Kelly Rosati, the group's vice president of community outreach. "We think it will be worthwhile to viewers."

The Erwin brothers started out their careers as cameramen for ESPN and the NFL and then switched to directing music videos and working with Christian artists such as Amy Grant, Switchfoot and Casting Crowns. They credit their motivation to produce "October Baby" to the Kendrick brothers, the pioneers of church-based filmmaking with "Fireproof" and "Facing the Giants."

The brothers' movie was made "out of respect" and as a way to "honor" what the Kendricks have done in the industry, said the director.

"There's a way we can make movies representing what we believe that also have a mass appeal," Erwin added.

The movie, rated PG-13, also stars John Schneider ("Dukes of Hazzard"), Jasmine Guy ("A Different World") and Shari Rigby ("The Young and the Restless").

"God's really on the move in Christian filmmaking," said Erwin.