

LINCOLN, Neb. (KOLN) - A powerful new documentary that is earning national recognition for its portrayal of mental illness is coming to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Tuesday night.

“Hidden Battles: Destigmatizing Mental Illness” shows the lives of four people living with severe mental health conditions. The film has already won Best Featured Documentary honors at the Los Angeles Gold Awards, New York Film Festival and Hollywood Gold Awards. The film also got a nomination from The Believe Psychology Film Festival.

The screening takes place at 7:15 p.m. Oct. 14 at the Mary Riepma Ross Theatre on the UNL campus.

Directed by Terrell and Lorraine Newby and executive produced by Jeromie Luginbill, “Hidden Battles” challenges stigmas about mental illness through storytelling and emotional honesty from the four individuals and their families. The film follows each subject’s journey while also talking about the toll that mental illness takes on the families who walk beside them.

Lorraine Newby emphasized the personal stories shared in the documentary, particularly for families.

“[The parents] didn’t know what to do, so they felt all alone,” Lorraine Newby said. “To hear their stories and to see them well up in tears and be able to say that they would give their life for their child, to take their place, to take the mental illness from them, it gets really hard.”

The film’s title reflects the often invisible essence of mental illness. Many suffering in silence while being marginalized by society.

“Letting people tell their story and providing them a chance to tell their story. So many times-- That’s why it’s called *Hidden Battles*,” Luginbill said. “We hide people like this in the corner and at the edges of society because we don’t want to be see them or be around them or exist with them. And that is what the name comes from.”

Newby also addressed the emotional toll care-giving takes, especially when family members define their purpose around a loved one’s illness.

“If you spend 10, 20, 30 years taking care of your brother, sister, child, parent, whatever, and then they get better or something happens, then you’re also left with an empty space. And how do you move forward?” Lorraine Newby said.

The film seeks not only to inform but to spark cultural change around how mental illness is perceived.

“Check your own biases and your own stigma and your own judgments about any group of people,” Luginbill said. “Think about the other side’s perception a little bit, not because you want to believe it, but because you try to expand your own thinking beyond your original thought.”

The creators hope the film will be used as an educational tool in schools, clinics and community centers to encourage empathy and recognition.

Tickets and more information about the screening are available at www.theross.org.