



In Movies

Wisconsin director feels some positive "Side Effects"

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Kathleen Slattery-Moschkau learned last month that sometimes side effects aren't always negative. Her debut film, "Side Effects," won the award for Best of Wisconsin at the Beloit International Film Festival, held Jan. 18-21.

"It was such a wonderful event. We had taken 'Side Effects' to other film festivals and it was so much fun to bring the film back home," Slattery-Moschkau says. "Such an unexpected treat to get that award. (BIFF) honestly did a bang-up job with the festival over all. Proud to be a part of it."

"Side Effects" features Karly Hert (Katherine Heigl), a woman torn between love and a profitable job in the pharmaceuticals industry. She's got to figure out whether she should stick with her job, which only offers her a monetary reward, or stick to her ethical standards.



"The film is an insider's look at the questionable marketing tactics, closely based on my experience as a drug rep," Slattery-Moschkau says. "It stars Katherine Heigl, of 'Grey's Anatomy' and she does a bang-up job."

"Side Effects" is not an autobiographical movie, she says, even though she pulled information from her own experiences.

"The ethical situation that she (Karly) finds herself in and her problems and, to some extent, her characteristics hit close to home," Slattery-Moschkau says. "(The movie is) fiction that's a satire."

There's no need to come into the movie with any predetermined notions about the pharmaceutical industry to enjoy the film.

"(We've gotten a) response from those interested in the pharmaceutical industry, but there's been a strong response in general from people," Slattery-Moschkau says. "It resonates with everyone because it's always about that fork in the road -- do the ethical thing and choose the career that you love or give in to corporate American and cash in for the golden handcuffs and the money. It's a dilemma everyone faces."

She wanted to keep "Side Effects" light and fun and she attributes some of the success to Heigl's portrayal of Karly. She says that Heigl's performance will make people "flip" for "Side Effects." Heigl made the jump from pharmaceutical rep into doctor's scrubs not too long after the movie was shot.

"It was shot literally just before she stepped onto the set of 'Grey's.' They hadn't started up yet and this was her last film before starting 'Grey's.' She was fantastic," Slattery-Moschkau says. "We shot in Madison and she and her mom came and they hung out for a couple weeks. She was a ball. She really liked Wisconsin."

After "Side Effects," Slattery-Moschkau decided to delve further into the topic with her documentary "Money Talks: Profits Before Patient Safety."

"We took 'Side Effects' across the country. There was such a tremendous response and (we had) people asking such amazing questions that we decided to turn to the experts," she says. "('Money Talks') features opinion leaders from Harvard, Columbia, investigative journalists, drug reps and it's holding up a mirror from the insider perspective. There's no sensationalism, just information."

She also just finished another film on the same topic written for the medical arena.

"I think at the end of the day two things have been important to me. I want people to be entertained, have a good time and walk away having information they never had before," Slattery-Moschkau says. "We're popping pills in record numbers and being bombarded with beautiful drug ads. I'm a reasonable person, we're probably all going to take pills later in life, but I want people asking better questions about the pills we are putting in our body. It's all about raising awareness and getting people thinking more."

Slattery-Moschkau says she's now working on a script about marriage, but she feels that it's another topic that people can relate to, through the humor and drama that comes with marriage.

"Side Effects" is now on DVD, which is available through the movie's Web site and Amazon.com.