

## **MOVIE PREMIERE**

# **Wine Country Festival Launches *A Chemical Reaction***

## **Documentary Explores Lawn Pesticide Safety Issues**

SONOMA, CALIF. — A quarter century ago a Canadian doctor named June Irwin single-handedly launched a campaign to pass a law controlling the use of pesticides in her small town. Her eventual victory in 1991 sparked a nationwide movement to honor the precautionary principle by restricting many toxic lawn and garden pesticides.

A year ago California Assemblywoman Fiona Ma tried to emulate Dr. Irwin by sponsoring the bill AB 977 to return control of pesticide use to local municipalities. Under intense pressure from pesticide lobbyists, Ma's bill failed.

"Here in the U.S. we have the opposite of the precautionary principle," states Ma, the majority whip of the California Assembly, in a controversial new documentary that explores the differences between U.S. and Canadian approaches to chemical lawn care. *A Chemical Reaction* will screen its West Coast premiere Sunday, Sept. 27 at 8 p.m. at the Wine Country Film Festival in Sonoma.

Featuring several other members of the San Francisco area anti-pesticide movement, *A Chemical Reaction* is gaining wide acceptance at film festivals across North America. The 75-minute film is also drawing the ire of the chemical lawn care industry, which is estimated to produce more than \$40 billion in revenues nationwide.

"When you take on this industry, you are facing almost bottomless pocketbooks," states Karl Tupper in a scene from *A Chemical Reaction*. He is a San Francisco-based staff scientist for the Pesticide Action Network of North America, which regularly disseminates information about the dangers associated with products such as weed 'n feed and lawn insect killers.

Much of the movie's story centers around Dr. Irwin, an eccentric dermatologist who was derided as "crazy" when she first brought her concerns to a town meeting in Canada in 1985. But when her town of Hudson, Quebec, told the lawn care giant then known as ChemLawn that it couldn't apply its products within town borders, it set off a chain of high-profile court cases that culminated in the Canadian Supreme Court in 2001.

The town won the case in a landmark 9-0 decision and the chemical ban has since spread to several other provinces. Hudson's victory, however, caused the U.S. lawn chemical industry to hire lobbyists to go state-by-state to pass "preemption laws" that prohibit local municipalities from banning pesticides. In 41 of 50 states — including California — the lobbyists were successful.

"The chemical industry goes to great lengths to show up everywhere to state that its products are safe, that they're tested," said Elizabeth Martin-Craig, an activist for the California group PesticideWatch.org that is featured in the film. "We have heard from hundreds of people who have been poisoned by these products. They are absolutely not safe."

That sentiment was echoed by Dr. Alan Greene, one of the nation's leading pediatricians and an outspoken anti-pesticide advocate.

"I believe that many of the pesticides in common use today will be proven to be some of the biggest risks to our children's health," said the founder of DrGreene.com. "The thing to remember is that these products are designed to kill."

The Wine Country Film Festival dates are Sept 17 - 20 in venues in Sonoma Valley and Sept 24 - 27 in venues in downtown Napa. Visit [www.WineCountryFilmFest.com](http://www.WineCountryFilmFest.com) for a complete listing of films and times. To learn more about *A Chemical Reaction*, visit [www.ChemicalReactionMovie.com](http://www.ChemicalReactionMovie.com).