The Guys Next Door ★★★★★
(2017) 74 min. DVD: $59.95 (299 w/PPR from edupassionriver.com). Passion River (avail. from most distributors).

In this sweet and enlightening documentary, filmmakers Amy Geller and Allie Humenuk spend three years following gay married couple Erik and Sandro as they become parents to two daughters borned by Erik’s longtime friend, Rachel, who acted as a surrogate mother. Fortysomething Rachel, the mom of three teenage kids of her own, takes a loving and philosophical approach to her all-important role in the aspirations of Erik and Sandro. And her husband and children seem comfortable with the non-traditional arrangement, which is a big plus since the two families become closer and are linked by more than the little girls. Geller and Humenuk spend the majority of the film shooting domestic scenes of Erik, a psychologist, and Sandro, a writer and Italian immigrant, as they transition from being a couple to becoming the parents of one and then two kids. The two men fall into individual roles that appear to be well-suited, with Sandro displaying nurturance that seems to come naturally. An engaging look at two modern families, this is recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (K. Fennessy)

Active Parenting: First Five Years—Video 1: You and Your Child ★★★★★

New parents often wonder about what’s going on in the minds of their babies—and how to respond in the best manner possible. Based on the concept of “active parenting” (which emphasizes bonding with children, encouragement, and non-violent discipline), You and Your Child—the first entry in the four-part Active Parenting: First Five Years series—helps parents understand why kids do some of the things they do at various ages. In an entertaining rap music segment, a teen girl and boy describe the normal behaviors and experiences of kids, including how infants explore their environment through touch (and put almost everything in their mouths), the tantrums of the terrible twos, the connection to parents through reading and story time, and more, as the tiny baby grows into a big kid. Acting out common situations, multicultural parents share their challenges and approaches. Topping the list, of course, is trying to figure out what a crying baby needs—quickly followed by learning how to function as a parent in the face of ongoing fatigue. Depicting various scenarios (including tough ones related to arguments and discipline), the program emphasizes that the challenges and triumphs in child-raising are similar for all. The other titles in the series are Preventing Problems, Encouraging Positive Behavior, and Preparing Your Child For School Success. Highly recommended. Aud: P. (C. Block)

The Great British Baking Show: Season 1 ★★★★★

Billied as Season 1 of the U.K.-aired series, this is actually a compilation of the 2014 fifth season of the BBC One reality competition called The Great British Bake-Off. Accompanied by jokey hosts Mel Giedroyc and Sue Perkins, food author Mary Berry and celebrity chef Paul Hollywood judge the contestants here, who are culled from thousands of applicants and include 12 bakers aged 17 to 69. Each of the 10 episodes is divided into three parts: the “Signature Bake,” in which contestants add their own personal touches to themes; the “Technical Bake,” where all follow the same recipe and are scored according to attention to detail; and “Showstopper Bake,” which offers the bakers a chance to show off their best skills. Not as gut-wrenching as any of Gordon Ramsay’s expulsive-laden cooking competitions, this series features a lot of dry humor and talk of flavors “coming through,” although the episode “Deserts” has one contestant throwing his baked Alaska in the trash after another person moves it out of the freezer to make room for her own. Including segments on “Cake,” “Pies and Tarts,” “Biscuits,” “Bread,” “Pastry,” “Continental Cake,” “Advanced Dough,” and “Pâtisserie,” this mouthwatering series is easily recommended. [Note: Season 2, 3 and 4 are also newly available.] Aud: P. (J. Williams-Wood)