

Looking Upwards' Compassion Film Festival Touches Many Chords



A group of Looking Upwards film-makers prepare for a shooting session of their film "Compassion", based on a poem by Leah Keith. From Left: Rocco Michaluk of Video and Vision of Newport, Joseph Gobble, William Buckley, Michael Collins and Jason Heywood.

As the world is facing tremendous challenges, what might a little compassion mean to you and those around you? Compassion was the theme explored in Looking Upwards' first film festival, held at The Jane Pickens Theater in Newport last Friday evening. This festival of short films was organized by a group of people with and without disabilities in collaboration with Rocco Michaluk of Video & Vision of Newport.

The group organized the festival, juried the event and selected nine films, mostly from Rhode Island film-makers. The festival's inspirational films touched many chords, from an exploration of the compassion inherent in us all, to issues that draw out our compassion such as the loss of loved ones, what it means to be different, homelessness, and the genocide in Darfur.

The Looking Upwards film group also screened their own film at this event. Titled "Compassion," the film earned the People's Choice award and was a colorful enactment of a poem by Leah Keith, "Compassion and Hate". Many local film-makers participated in the festival, including including Christian Roderiques of The Boys and Girls Club of Newport County, Jimmy Winters and Al Angel, Sarah Shoen, Sandra Hammel and Rocco Michaluk.

Films screened at Looking Upwards Compassion Film Festival 2011:

- 1st Place: Compassion – Sarah Shoen
- 2nd Place: Homeless – Jimmy Winters & Al Angel
- 3rd Place: Compassion – Boys & Girls Club – Christian Roderiques
- People's Choice Compassion – Looking Upwards
- Invisible Children – Joe Castillo, music by Chris McCall
- Darfur – Sandra Hammel
- Translate – Rocco Michaluk
- Rash of Robberies – Sam White, Animation by Tapeart.com
- Aliens Among Us – Craig Roberts

Proceeds from the festival benefited Looking Upwards. The Compassion Film Festival marked the launch of Disability Awareness Week 2011 (April 8th – 15th), a week of entertainment and unique experiences designed to highlight the talents and diversity in our community as well as to deepen awareness of the daily experience of people with various disabilities. A full schedule of events is available on Looking Upwards' website, www.lookingupwards.org.