

Photo Flash: Australia's Largest Disability-Specific Film Festival, FOCUS ON ABILITY Holds U.S.A. Launch

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The organizers behind Australia's largest disability-specific film festival, the Focus on Ability Short Film Festival, held their official U.S. launch of Focus on Ability USA March 7th at the Garry Marshall Theatre in Los Angeles this weekend. The evening celebrated inclusion through the art of storytelling in their continued effort to raise awareness of the abilities of people with disabilities around the world.

The Focus on Ability USA launch event showcased several of the top entries from the Focus on Ability Short Film Festival, all of which highlight the skills and achievements of people with disabilities. The evening also included an awards presentation and hosted reception. The event was co-hosted by actor Nick Hardcastle (*Home and Away, Liquid Bridge*) and actress Jessica Orcsik (*A Death Perspective, Pass*). Other celebrity attendees included CJ Jones (*Baby Driver*), Naomi Grossman (*American Horror Story*), Geri Jewell (*Deadwood, Facts of Life*), Reese Noi (*Game of Thrones, When They See Us*), George Steeves (*NCIS/LA, Penciltown*), Micah Fowler (*Speechless*), Santina Muha (*One Day at a Time*), Lillian Carrier (*NCIS: New Orleans*), Tobias Forrest (*How to Get Away with Murder, Weeds*) and more.

Directly linked to the Focus on Ability International Short Film Festival established in 2008 in Sydney, Australia by Australian-based not-for-profit disability employment agency NOVA Employment, this festival received donations over \$160,000 worth of cash and prizes to encourage filmmakers and people with disability to tell their stories. In 2019, 244 films were entered from 26 countries, 12 films were screened across Australia's free to air television stations and the festival held additional screenings in Sydney, Los Angeles, New York, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Fremantle, Auckland, and Malawi. Its audience capacity is over 1,000,000 people and continues to grow from its grassroots efforts into a global non-profit.


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Said Focus on Ability Ambassador Paula Duncan, "While disability inclusion has had a slow rise throughout the entertainment industry, the demand for more accurate representation has hit an all-time high. Market research has indicated that about half of US viewers support authentic portrayals of disabled characters. With Focus USA we are dedicated to showcasing film as a medium to schools across the United States, with the aim to continue to change people's perceptions about the lives and abilities of people with disabilities."



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The aims and goals of the organization are to decrease bullying in schools, break down the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from achieving their aspirations and career dreams while changing attitudes and perceptions about the lives and abilities of people with disabilities. The organization promotes inclusion, not just within the film industry, but in people's day to day lives across the USA. It's no longer cool not to care.

For more information about the organization, visit www.focusonability.com.