

# FILM FESTIVAL LIGHTS THE WAY FOR NONPROFIT AND GRASSROOTS FILMS

Story and Photo by Sharla Chamberlain

**L**ights. Camera. Help. film festival to take place July 31.

Few images in the world will tug at your heartstrings more than a pair of sad and droopy puppy eyes looking up at you from behind a metal cage. They peer into your very soul until you are pulling out your checkbook to support whatever do-good organization is promising to save them with your donation. This is the idea behind the films-for-a-cause genre of filmmaking and the new film festival that supports it.

Lights. Camera. Help. is the premiere film festival dedicated to telling the stories of nonprofit and grassroots organizations through the use of film and video. It will take place July 31, 2009, in Austin, Texas, a city known for its dedicated volunteers but lacking in its charitable donations.

The homeless and often abused animals residing at SPCA Austin and Town Lake Animal Shelter have more than enough caring hands to feed and play with them, but in the end, it's money that keeps them healthy and happy. Austin's Campaign for Philanthropy coined the phrase "I live here, I give here," in an effort to motivate Austinites to give financially to charitable organizations. It was created when recent research discovered that Austin is one of the highest ranked cities for volunteerism, but one of the lowest for charitable giving.

The Lights. Camera. Help. film festival was created in this light. It will donate all proceeds from attendees of the festival to the organizations that are the subjects of the winning films. One of the goals of the festival is also to inspire its viewers to continue to donate.

"This is a film festival for nonprofit and grassroots advocacy organizations to submit their films to get exposure and show the world what they're doing to make the

world a better place," says David J. Neff, one of the three co-founders of Lights. Camera. Help.

Neff and the other two co-founders, Aaron Bramley and Rich Vázquez, believe that video is the most powerful tool for mass communication in the media landscape of the 21st century.

"We created this film festival because these films have the power to convey hope," says Bramley. "Lights. Camera. Help. is about that hope."

This is an age where seeing is believing and sending out a monthly newsletter is not enough anymore. Organizations worldwide have begun to use film and video as a primary means of communicating to their customers and shareholders. Apple has videos posted online to teach customers how to use their products to supplement the traditional instruction manual.

Unfortunately, many nonprofits have not yet jumped on the film and video bandwagon. Nonprofits are notorious for being some of the last organizations to harness the ever-growing power of technology. Most have very tight budgets and may feel that spending money on technology is too risky.



John Turner filmmaker for The United Way

But if these organizations do not keep up with the times, they will fall behind. Neff, Bramley and Vázquez know the vital role nonprofits play in the bettering of society and have designed this film festival to motivate them to do more. Lights. Camera. Help. will give philanthropic organizations the opportunity to reinvigorate their causes through new and powerful medium in an inexpensive way.

On Thursday, April 30, the Reel-to-Reality opening event officially began the festival's submissions process. Representatives from the American Cancer Society, United Way, Capital Area Food Bank and Best Friends Animal Sanctuary discussed the value of film and video in today's nonprofit community, showed trailers of their films and formally submitted them to the festival.

"As the saying goes, a picture speaks 1,000 words, so we really believe that video is the way of the future," said United Way representative John Turner before showing his film that advocates the importance of volunteering. It was free to submit to Lights. Camera. Help, which is a rarity among film festivals. Austin Film Festival, for example, charges between \$30 and \$50 per entry depending on the type of film and the date of submission.

"We really wanted to make sure that every nonprofit organization is able to tell its story, regardless of resources," says Neff.

Video entries for the festival are accepted throughout the months of May and June. Accepted films included feature length films, short films and public service announcements of dramatic, documentary, experimental and animated content.

Films are not required to be submitted by the organizations themselves. Individuals or groups are welcome to enter films so long as they support and promote a nonprofit or grassroots organization.

The winning entries will be recognized at the festival on July 31 and given monetary donations (raised from ticket sales) as a prize. ✱

For updates on the status of the film festival or how to enter, visit the Lights. Camera. Help. Web site at [www.lightscamerahelp.com](http://www.lightscamerahelp.com).

## ★ RESTAURANT GUIDE

<b>HABANA</b> 709 E. 6 <sup>th</sup> St - 443.4252 2728 S. Congress - 443.4253	It's like a vacation, sitting next to the river, munching on sweet & salty plantain chips. For a truly Cuban experience, order a Roast Pork Sandwich or Ropa Vieja w/ Congris.	<b>HOG ISLAND DELI</b> 1612 Lavaca 482.9090	Chow down on the Best Philly Cheese Steak in Texas! They also have great hoagies with a variety of high-quality Italian cold cuts.
<b>SAO PAULO'S</b> 2809 San Jacinto 473.9988	Skip the Tex-Mex and go for some Brazilian Black Bean Stew, Paella, or the Churrasquinho Meat Platter w/ all the fixins. For those who imbibe, the Caipirinha is a must.	<b>JIMMY JOHN'S</b> 601 W. MLK - 478.3111 3203 Red River - 499.0100	A locally-owned chain that's out to please...they'll make it how you want it. Start your addiction with the popular Beach Club or Italian Night Club.
<b>COFFEEHOUSES</b>			
<b>AUSTIN JAVA</b> 1206 Parkway - 476.1829 1608 Barton Springs Rd. - 482.9450	Extremely popular place with a huge selection of coffees and free Wi-Fi. Brunch, lunch and dinner too, with fast and friendly service.	<b>LULU B's (Food Wagon)</b> 2101 S. Lamar 921.4828	Fresh & spicy Vietnamese Sandwiches on French rolls (BBQ or Lemongrass Pork, Chicken, Tofu); tasty Summer Rolls & thick avocado smoothies. (Cash only/noon-6pm)
<b>CAFÉ MUNDI</b> 1704 E. 5 <sup>th</sup> St. 236.8634	An eclectic East Austin gem, serving fair-trade coffee, imported beer & wine, and some great food for vegetarians & meat eaters alike. Breakfast day & night.	<b>MANNY HATTAN'S N.Y. DELI</b> 9503 Research Blvd. 794.0088	If you're craving GOOD Matzo Ball Soup or Cheese Blintzes, it's worth the drive. Sandwiches so big you can take half home, and the Cheesecake is flown in from N.Y!
<b>CLEMENTINE</b> 2200 Manor Rd. 472.9900	Sleek modern shop on the Manor Strip with signature specialties like the Peanut Butter Bomb & Mocha Clementine. Also, vegan treats by Celeste and live music on Tue & Fri.	<b>NEWORLDEL</b> 4101 Guadalupe 451.7170	A neighborhood café offering excellent soups, sandwiches & salads. Classic Tuna Melts, piled-high Ruebens, a unique Chicken Salad, and a perfect Broccoli/Cheeddar Soup.
<b>EPOCH COFFEEHOUSE</b> 221 W. North Loop 454.3762	A magnet for serious nerd types...laptops, chess, and tasty techno-ambient music. Beans provided by Texas Coffee Roasters and the pizza is brought in.	<b>PHOENICIA BAKERY &amp; DELI</b> 2912 S. Lamar - 447.4444 4701 Burnet Rd. - 374.9081	Everything you need to have your own Middle Eastern party...just hit the cold cases and then the olive bar. And don't forget the Baklava for dessert.
<b>FLIPNOTICS</b> 1601 Barton Springs Rd 480.8646	The coffee Mecca for Austin's acoustic musicians, with an outdoor patio and some very good sandwiches. If you're not a caffeine freak, they also serve beer.	<b>TOP NOTCH BURGERS</b> 7525 N. Lamar 452.2181	Mom & Pop run shop with old-fashion charbroiled burgers and extra thick fries at bargain prices. Not many of these left, so get it while you still can.
<b>THE HIDEOUT</b> 617 Congress 236.8485	Funky & relaxed downtown hangout w/ excellent coffee & perfect foam! The Theater upstairs showcases comedy acts and offers cheap rehearsal space to actors & directors.	<b>WHEATSVILLE CO-OP &amp; DELI</b> 3101 Guadalupe 478.2667	Where the health conscious shop and the biggest selling item is a Southern-Fried Tofu Patty on focaccia bread. And yes, they have outstanding 'natural meat' sandwiches, too.
<b>JO'S HOT COFFEE</b> 1300 S. Congress - 444.3800 242 W. 2 <sup>nd</sup> St. - 469.9003	The hottest spot on the block, with a second location on 2 <sup>nd</sup> . Walk, run, bike or drive to this great local hangout and catch free outdoor movies or live music on Thurs. nights.	<b>DESSERTS</b>	
<b>PROGRESS COFFEE</b> 500 San Marcos (at E. 5 <sup>th</sup> ) 493.0963	Located in a revamped media complex, this socially aware, art savvy hub serves organic, fair-trade coffee and the best Bagel, Lox & Cream Cheese in East Austin.	<b>DOLCE VITA GELATO &amp; ESPRESSO</b> 4222 Duval 323.2686	Gelato as sustenance in this Hyde Park locale that also offers Italian sodas, dessert liqueurs, pastries & Panini with the feel of a Parisian sidewalk café.
<b>RUTA MAYA</b> 3601 S. Congress 707.9637	Up on the hill where the big water tower looms over S. Congress, you'll find the new location of this classic community coffee house. World Music & political fundraisers rule.	<b>HEY CUPCAKE (Food Wagon)</b> 1600 Block of S. Congress 5530 Burnet Rd.; 476.CAKE	Line up at the Silver Stream and hope they're not out of your favorite flavor (7 kinds to choose from) or the free whipped cream they squirt in the center. Yumm.
<b>DELIS &amp; SANDWICH SHOPS</b>			
<b>BEST WURST (Food Cart)</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> and San Jacinto St. 912.9545	Great tasting (and smelling) Bratwurst and Italian Sausage cooked in the great outdoors. Don't forget the yummy grilled onions. Servin'em up 8pm - 3am.	<b>MADCAKES</b> 3808 Spicewood Springs Rd. 795.9285	Cakes, cookies & dessert bars any Mad Hatter would devour. Made from scratch w/real butter & natural flavorings. Killer Lemon Bars & Pumpkin Cookies slathered in caramel icing.
<b>DIRTY MARTIN'S</b> 2808 Guadalupe 477.3173	80 years old and still a player. Delicious burgers, chili, fries & shakes at unbelievable prices. When everything is made fresh daily, the flavors stand out from the rest.	<b>QUACK'S 43<sup>rd</sup> St. BAKERY</b> 411 E. 43 <sup>rd</sup> St. 453.3399	Another one of those places that makes Austin great. Righteous Key Lime Pie and huge Chocolate Éclairs. Perfect coffee & free Wi-Fi.
<b>FOODHEADS</b> 616 W. 34 <sup>th</sup> St. 420.8400	A short jog from the Campus to this cute little house with some of the most creative sandwiches in town. Daily specials and a build-your-own option as well.	<b>SUGAR MAMA'S BAKESHOP</b> 1905 S. 1st St. 448.3727	Cupcakes are the current rage and this place does them proud, and all-natural! Fans crave the French Toast, Jack's Lemon and the Black & Tan (made w/Guinness & Irish Cream).
<b>FLYING FALAFEL &amp; POBOYS</b> 2001 Guadalupe St. 494.1400	Recently opened by a 'Cajun Arab' family, this whole-in-the-wall has some of the best Middle Eastern food (try the Sampler Plate) as well as excellent Poboy & Gumbo.	<b>SWEETISH HILL CAFÉ &amp; BAKERY</b> 1120 W. 6 <sup>th</sup> St. 472.1347	An old favorite in the Clarksville neighborhood. Stop in for some coffee and a Chocolate Croissant, Banana Bread Pudding or whole Peach Pie, when it's in season.
<b>FRENCH &amp; EUROPEAN</b>			
		<b>BLUE DAHLIA BISTRO</b> 1115 E. 11 <sup>th</sup> St. 542.9542	BIG, beautiful, open-faced sandwiches at fantastic prices! Try the Roast Beef or Egg Salad. Fabulous soups, waffles & blintzes (wknds) and a lovely bamboo patio out back.