

Dear Filmmaker,

Firstly, we would just like to express our excitement at the fact that you are interested in participating in the SI DocFest. By choosing to be a part of this, you are choosing to make a difference in our community – a choice many high school students may find daunting or intimidating. We believe that anyone can make a difference, but we especially have faith in young minds like yours: driven to inspire or create change for the betterment of society.

With technology as advanced and accessible as it is today, we think high school students are capable of producing both proficient and important work. We hope that, through this process, you will learn a lot in terms of the social issue you've chosen and construct a documentary film that has a meaningful message. One of the most important points we want to get across to students through the foundation of the SI DocFest is that filmmaking can have a societal and educational impact beyond the entertainment factor. Although the movie industry may have a reputation of rehearsed scenes and acted emotions, documentaries are unique in that raw emotions from real-life situations take precedence over scripted material.

We hope for a diversity of film topics and are anxious to see what students can do when equipped with a camera and passion. In terms of content, the SI DocFest welcomes all points of view. Be sure to take advantage of the resources in your community to help you research (visit your local library, reference local newspaper or magazine archives, etc.) and certainly use teachers, parents and friends for feedback once you start to piece your film together.

Something important to keep in mind is that experience is not instrumental in participating in this film contest. Even if you've never touched a camera before, lack of film background should not deter you from participating in the SI DocFest. Anyone can make a film! To make a documentary for this contest, all you need is passion, drive, a camera, and a moving story. It will help you to remember that this is also a discovery journey for contestants, and that in the end you will benefit from this process.

Some pointers: use the knowledge you've acquired in school to help you tell the story you want to tell. Put your social issues in context – show us why they are significant in our community and what people can do to help. Establish a good relationship with any group or organization that you use in your documentary and always maintain integrity whether the camera is on or off.

Most importantly though, *enjoy* this exercise and absolutely have fun with it. Though you may be dealing with a serious social issue, making a film that will bring some awareness and understanding to it should be an extremely rewarding experience as a high school student.

We sincerely hope everyone will walk away from the SI DocFest more inspired and more motivated to document important social issues in our community. Highlighting what is already being done to address these issues will also be ultimately beneficial to the existing groups or organizations, producing a win-win situation for all involved. We very much look forward to meeting you and wish you the best of luck on this important adventure.

Remember, you can make a REEL difference!

Monica Alba
SI DocFest 2008 Organizer
monica@dogooddocs.com

Loreli Alba
SI DocFest 2008 Organizer
loreli@dogooddocs.com