

## CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL } April 4 - 15, 2018



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## 70 YEARS OF 'FUN WITH A PURPOSE'

April 05, 2017 | posted by Lara Klaber in Filmmakers



*Highlights* magazine is a reliable fixture in the doctor's office waiting area, or, for kids lucky enough to have a personal subscription, a prized possession snatched from the mailbox. It is also the subject of "44 Pages," by director Tony Shaff and producer Rebecca Green. The film follows the production of the publication's 70th anniversary issue and the evolution of the world's most popular children's magazine.

"I started seeing kids in my life getting *Highlights* in the mail, and I noticed they were dropping their iPads to pick up this magazine and devour it from cover to cover," says Shaff. "I started asking the question: why does this magazine capture so much attention from kids, and how is it still relevant?"

As filming began, new storylines arose concerning the ever-changing state of childhood, the uncertain future of print publications, and how the magazine aims to teach—or protect—its young readers from the larger issues of the world.

"Going into a film, you're looking for the conflict and drama and all these high-stakes villains," Shaff says. "'44 Pages' is about kind, genuine, ethical, honest people. One of the challenges was shaping a story that didn't rely on those traditional plot elements."

Many of those kind, genuine people work out of the publication's headquarters in Columbus, Ohio.

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Although *Highlights* is billed as a children's magazine, Shaff finds that the basic core human values it teaches "relate directly to us as adults." He hopes that viewers will not only walk away from the film with more insights into the magazine, "but a better understanding of how we can all be better to each other, and better citizens in the world."



ABOUT 20 |

*Highlights* has been "illuminating" its readers since 1946, delivering more than a billion issues to children around the world.

"44 Pages" serves to continue spreading that light.

"It's a film that shows you something you think you know, and gives you something different that you didn't expect," says Green. "On the surface, it is a memory from childhood and a magazine. But it opens you up to thinking about bigger topics, issues, and your role in society and your role in kids' lives."

—Amy Brown

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