



## Lights, Camera, Action!

### Acadia's Youth Film Project Brings Mental Illness to the Forefront



*Teens and adults involved in the creation of Acadia's film, The Road Back, watch a video monitor during filming at Hermon High School.*

The awareness of mental illness, such as youth anxiety and depression, has historically been overshadowed by stigma, prejudice, and misunderstanding. In 2011, Acadia Hospital turned the table on this trend and shed light on these tough issues through an innovative youth film project called, *The Road Back*. This short dramatic film, written by Faith Bishop, a Hermon High School student, became a reality with the help of a \$20,000 grant from the Davis Family Foundation, and additional funding from Bangor Savings Bank, the Bingham Program, and Spring Harbor Hospital.

As executive producer of the film project, Acadia Hospital hired Project AWARE, a Maine nonprofit that specializes in youth empowerment through video production to help create the film. Initially, teen focus groups were held in the Bangor area to identify issues to be addressed in the story line. Many months of work were put into the creation of the short film, but along the way all youth were supported and advised by Acadia Hospital and Project AWARE staff, youth

leaders, and film/editing professionals.

"We had a blast working with the student and community volunteers on this project," commented Alan Comeau, communications officer at the Acadia Hospital. "As part of this project, youth had the opportunity to learn more about anxiety and depression, the world of film production, and how to produce a high quality video product."

In March of 2012, the hard working team held a sold out red carpet premiere of *The Road Back* at The Gracie Theatre on the campus of Husson University, in Bangor. Just like in Hollywood, the youth actors arrived in a limo dressed in their finest attire. In April, the film made its television debut on Bangor's WABI-TV 5. Additionally, a copy of the DVD has been distributed, free of charge, to more than 100 middle and high schools in the state, and the film won a Golden Arrow Award from the Maine Public Relations Council.

Comeau says, "We are so proud of the hard work that each and every one of the teens put into this project. I think, in the end, we accomplished our ultimate goal, which was to encourage young people and their families to access appropriate care without delay, as early intervention leads to more successful treatment outcomes."

For more information about *The Road Back*, go to [www.acadiatheroadback.org](http://www.acadiatheroadback.org).



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