

A NEW KIND OF LISTENING

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ORGANIZER'S TOOLKIT



A NEW KIND OF LISTENING

A documentary film by Kenny Dalsheimer

Running Time: 57 Minutes

USA Color Video 4x3 English w/English subtitles

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Table of Contents

About the Project.....	p.3
About the Toolkit.....	p.4
Organizing a Screening.....	p.5
The Local Committee	p.6
First Meeting: Introducing the Project	p.7-8
Venue and Equipment Checklists.....	p.9
Getting the Word Out.....	p.10-11
Second Meeting: Publicity and Event Agenda.....	p.12
Planning the Screening Event.....	p.13
Discussion Questions.....	p. 14
One Week Before and Day of Event	p.15
Post-Event Evaluation.....	p.16
Organizer Templates and Resources on Website.....	p.17

A NEW KIND OF LISTENING

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About the Project

A New Kind of Listening is a moving documentary about an experimental theater group that includes people who are non-speaking as well as non-disabled participants. The group meets weekly for a year, and together they create an original and compelling performance piece. Woven together with the story of one participant's intense life-long struggle to be seen as a whole person, the film is both a strong advocacy call for the right to self-expression and a celebration of the power of inclusive arts to build community.

In January of 2005, filmmaker Kenny Dalsheimer was invited to document the work of the Community Inclusive Theater Group in Durham, NC. Kenny was intrigued by director Richard Reho's unique vision for this work. Reho inspires and teaches a co-creative process—one in which participants come together with no script and work individually and collectively to create a performance. In a radical move, Reho asked people with significant disabilities who are non-speaking to join the project. The group performed its original piece, "The Song that Greens the Earth", in November of 2005 at the Center for the Performing Arts in Raleigh, NC.

After shooting for many months, Kenny saw the potential for a film that would be a catalyst for essential social change. He saw it as a vehicle for initiating dialogue on inclusion and the right to self-expression for people with disabilities. Kenny and co-producer Polly Medicott wanted the film to challenge unquestioned assumptions many people have about the intelligence and competence of people who are non-speaking. They realized that the story of Polly and her son would best convey this message.

A New Kind of Listening shows how diverse members of a community can support each other to express their unique perspectives. The film demonstrates that with no funding or high-tech equipment, creative expression through the arts can transform separate, unconnected individuals into a close-knit group of friends.

Our purpose in sharing the film is to encourage inclusive arts initiatives in communities far and wide. To realize that vision, our grassroots screening campaign will be active on two fronts: Polly Medicott will take the film on the road in her tiny Teardrop camper, using screening events and workshops to promote arts inclusion for people with disabilities and their fellow citizens. At the same time, DVD's will be available through our website to arts and advocacy organizations, cultural centers, faith communities, universities, schools, conference organizers and individuals. By visiting the website, folks can easily schedule their own events, purchase DVD's, and use the Organizer's Toolkit to plan a successful screening.

A New Kind of Listening can be a powerful tool for growing communities where everyone feels a sense of real belonging. We invite you to join our campaign to promote inclusive arts!

Kenny Dalsheimer
director/co-producer

Polly Medicott
co-producer

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About the Toolkit

Welcome to our grassroots campaign for inclusive arts! Film has the power to move people to action, and screening *A New Kind of Listening* promotes new ways of thinking about how the arts can connect people. Beyond awareness, however, our film and website can help you initiate arts projects where people with and without disabilities come together to express their creative ideas. In the process, real community is born.

Our Organizer's Toolkit online resources offer a practical model to assist you. The Toolkit model begins with forming a local organizing committee which will develop collaborative relationships and create opportunities for accessible arts. The Toolkit then offers help with next steps: identifying a venue, coordinating publicity, and planning your agenda and follow-up activities.

[The Organizer's Toolkit](#) is located in the Resources section of the website, also has support materials that you can download, including email templates, a sample press release, and an event flyer.

The larger vision of our film project, and the purpose of the North American grassroots screening tour of *A New Kind of Listening*, is for new inclusive arts projects to emerge in places where the film is shown. Bringing Polly Medicott to your screening event to share her experiences—with Chris, the theater group, the film, and inclusive arts initiatives in other communities—can create a powerful impetus toward that important goal.

We also want your screening to advance your own goals, such as raising money for your organization, increasing visibility and engagement with your organization's mission and programs, or identifying new community allies with whom you can build future collaborations.

The website for *A New Kind of Listening*, the Organizer's Toolkit, and Polly's energy and expertise are all available to support your screening event and follow-up activities.

Thanks again, and good luck!



Polly Medicott and teardrop camper prepares for film tour.

Organizing a Screening

There are a number of different goals and programs you might be considering in organizing a screening. The film could be screened at small or large community events, as part of disability awareness month activities, or at a conference session, class or training. Screenings might be followed by informal discussion, an expert panel discussion, or a Q&A with the filmmakers. The follow-up may include sign-up sheets for an email list or focus group, plans for exploratory meetings about inclusive arts opportunities, an experiential inclusive arts workshop, consultation about starting an inclusive project, or some combination of these. You will also have your own ideas on how to use the film to advance your mission, vision and goals.

Our hope is that you and your organization will use a screening of *A New Kind of Listening* to lay the groundwork for an inclusive arts project in your community. The screening event can be the first step in a process of creating new opportunities for arts experiences that are fully accessible and welcoming to all members of the community. Inclusive arts projects can be based on any kind of creative expression, such as theater (improv or scripted); visual arts (painting, collage, sculpture); music (percussion ensembles, choirs); creative writing (poetry, journaling, short stories); dance/movement; photography and filmmaking, and more.

We also understand if you are planning a small house party screening, a one-time showing at a conference or class, or a simple fundraiser for your organization, that starting a community arts project may not be your goal.

In the sections that follow, we offer flexible guidelines to help you organize a successful event; and we invite you to adapt and modify our suggestions to fit your needs.

However you choose to *use A New Kind of Listening* at your event, showing the film will generate a lot of excitement and enthusiasm. Have fun with it, and use the positive energy to engage your audience to take action!

The Local Committee

One to two months before the screening, an organizing committee can be formed which will serve a number of functions. The most important is to build collaborative relationships across community sectors, especially between the arts and disability advocacy sectors. The committee process is also an effective way to get the word out to the greatest number of people about the event, divide organizational tasks, and develop shared community goals and plans for inclusive arts projects.

Identifying Members of the Committee

As soon as you start thinking about showing the film, perhaps even before you have chosen a venue and date/time, begin to identify potential members of your local organizing committee:

- Invite parents of teen-agers or young adults with disabilities and adults with disabilities who are active and independent in your community to participate and/or recommend committee members.
- Contact local or state affiliates of our project and ask them to refer you to the disability advocates and leaders in your area. There's a list of project supporters on our website.
- Identify existing arts education programs that are available to people with disabilities and individuals with interest and expertise in inclusive arts and invite them to participate.
- Include leaders from the local Arc and other civic and non-profit disability rights organizations.
- Reach out to your local Arts Council and leading arts organizations and request that they send a representative to the committee.

We strongly recommend that your planning committee have at least one person from the arts community, one or two from the disability advocacy community, and at least one person who is living with disabilities. Other members might include representatives from progressive faith congregations, organizations which promote diversity like a Y or a cultural center, and community-based theater groups.

Call people to see if they are interested and then follow up with an e-mail invitation. Let them know that this is a short-term committee with a very focused project and that will only meet two or three times.

The following sections provide example guidelines and timetables for committee planning and publicity.

First Meeting: Introducing the Project

For your first meeting, decide on a meeting date and an accessible meeting space, and download the committee e-mail invitation from our website bring your group together, introduce the project, and briefly outline the meeting agenda.

Sample Agenda for First Meeting

- **Welcome** – Introduce yourself, the documentary, and the grassroots campaign for inclusive arts. Ask the other participants to introduce themselves and share past experiences or ideas about community inclusive arts.
- **Trailer** – Show the film trailer and discuss initial thoughts, feelings and ideas. Who should see the film? What are its core messages?
- **Contact List** – Have committee members write down email, phone number, and organization/affiliation.
- **Venue** – Brainstorm about possible venues that will have low or no rental fees. The space must be wheelchair accessible, and have accessible parking. (See Venue & Equipment Criteria on page 9).
- **Funding** – Discuss ideas for funding or sponsorship to cover possible expenses for printing, equipment and space rental. You might consider disability advocacy and arts organizations, and local Arcs or civic organizations. Sometimes these groups can donate a few hundred dollars for community outreach without a formal grant proposal.
- **Expanding the Network** – Think about other community organizers and visionaries, especially in the arts or disability sectors, who would like to be on the committee or on the e-mail list to receive and forward information.
- **Engagement** – Ask each person to go to the website, sign up for our newsletter, and become a fan on our Facebook Fan page.
- **Publicity Plan** – Review publicity timeline for the screening: after this meeting they will receive the Save the Date e-mail to send out to their contacts and groups; at the second meeting printed flyers will be distributed; after the second meeting they will receive the e-mail to invite their contacts to the event, which will include the press release and sample Facebook postings.

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- **Community Publicity** – Identify monthly newsletters (congregations, service providers, arts councils, community organizations) and ask if committee members have contacts with local newspapers, radio stations, TV reporters and/or monthly magazine publishers.
- **Event Workshop Option** – If there is a budget for presenters, you may invite Polly Medicott to attend your screening and/or lead an inclusive arts workshop on the following day. Appearances and workshops should be requested at least two months in advance.
- **Panel Members** – Determine if you would like to have a panel discussion following the screening in order to jumpstart an inclusive arts planning process. (see agenda for Second Meeting). Make a list of potential panel members and a plan for contacting them.
- **Related Events** – In addition to the screening, your committee may want to have a reception with refreshments, an inclusive art exhibit, or other side events.
- **Scheduling** – Select date/time for the next meeting between four and two weeks prior to your event.
- **Conclusion** – Before ending the meeting, ask committee members to share any questions and feedback they might have and offer ideas about possible next steps, contacts and resources.



Chris Mueller-Medicott and his mom, Polly Medicott, at theater group rehearsal.
Photo Ava Johnson

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Venue & Equipment Checklist

Research and secure the following before confirming a venue. The timeframe for the event will be about 2 hours.

Venue

- ✓ A room size that is appropriate for your expected audience size.
- ✓ A screen that can be seen from all seats in the room and which matches audience size
- ✓ Appropriate lighting control so room can be dimmed for optimal viewing
- ✓ A quiet screening time and location with minimal adjacent noise.
- ✓ Seats that can be removed for expected number of wheelchairs.
- ✓ Venue, building and restrooms are easily accessible to people with disabilities.
- ✓ Sufficient parking, including accessible parking.

Equipment

It's very important to have a technical point person who is familiar with video and television projection, audio systems, and other details related to a quality film screening.

- ✓ A projection screen (usually 8'x10' for a larger audience), or large TV for smaller gatherings. A screen can be rented or borrowed if necessary.
- ✓ An LCD Projector for larger events. Be sure projector has appropriate lumens/brightness for space.
- ✓ Speakers or sound system to fill space and provide optimal listening experience. Audio is the most important technical detail, and people need to be able to hear film dialogue and music clearly.
- ✓ A DVD player that has been tested with DVD and a large-screen TV or video projector with computer input.
- ✓ All necessary audio and video cables to connect DVD player with video projection device and audio system.
- ✓ Meet with your technical expert and review video and audio needs before making the final decision on the venue.
- ✓ Run a test of the DVD to verify video and sound quality and determine if you need to arrange for outside equipment or cables, etc.
- ✓ Exchange contact info, (including cellphone # and e-mail), with tech support person and confirm availability for date and time of the event.

Getting the Word Out

The following are general guidelines and tips for your publicity campaign. Coverage in the local media can dramatically increase attendance at your screening of *A New Kind of Listening* and help you use the event to raise the profile of your organization. Remember that everything related to the event must be accessible to people with various disabilities. All publicity should state that the venue is wheelchair accessible, the film is captioned, and individuals are invited to request needed accommodations. Give a name and contact info for accommodations. For a large event, consider having the film audio-described.

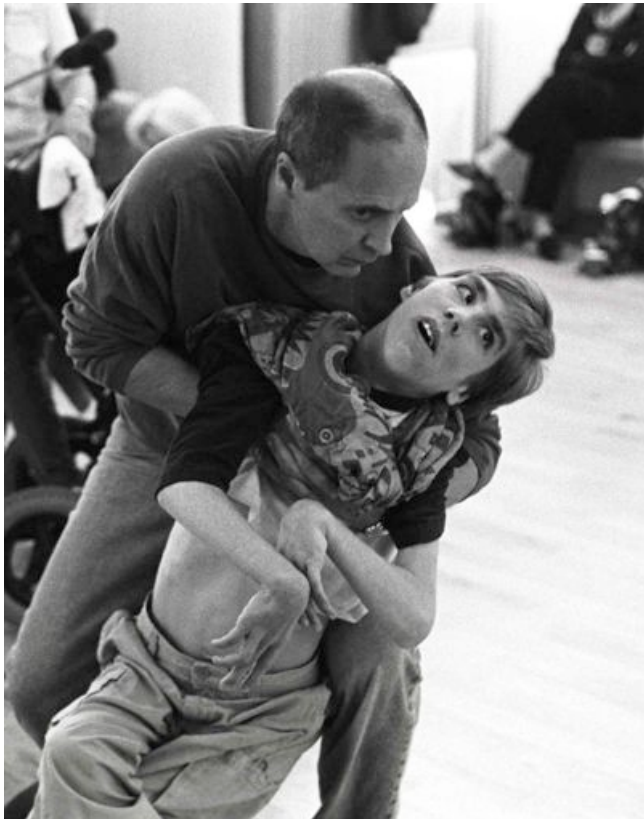
- **Email Organizing Committee and Supporters** – After the first meeting, set up your e-mail group, send out the Save the Date e-mail, solicit media contacts, and update everyone on ideas that might be coming up about an inclusive arts project.
- **Community Partners** – Make a list of your “Community Supporters” or “Event Sponsors” and confirm that they can be listed on your publicity. Partners can be used later as a local angle for pitching the story to the press.
- **Publicity Chairs** – Identify one or two people who will lead publicity work. Key tasks include: 1) identify newsletters (including those of area service providers for people with disabilities), and submission deadlines, and e-mail short text-only announcements (use synopsis from press kit). 2) send event info to the entertainment weekly’s arts calendar, online calendars, and community radio and TV calendars. 3) email press release and pitch the story to local newspapers, magazines and radio/TV reporters. (See Detailed Publicity Timeline in the Organizer’s Toolkit section of our website.)
- **Facebook** – Identify a member of organizing committee with expertise in social networking and Facebook. Promote the event by e-mailing fresh and interesting posts to your group(s) and use community art/event blogs.
- **Media Contacts** – Pitch the story to arts, film, theater, health and living sections, for the Sunday, weekend and daily issues of the newspaper, as well as the entertainment weekly. Ask if committee members have contacts with local press and media people or expertise in working with the media. Make an effort to contact multiple reporters and editors at one paper. If there is someone on your committee (or yourself!) who would be considered an expert, check with that person first, then suggest that the local reporter contact them. Polly and Kenny are available to speak with reporters by appointment — just e-mail us.

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- **Human Interest Angle** – Articles and interviews in the local media about the film event and the human interest story (e.g. Chris and Polly's story) will increase event attendance and raise interest in the inclusive arts issue. Send reporters photos of Chris, the theater group, and the Teardrop camper.
- **Press Release** – You can download the press kit from our website, which includes low res photos, film synopses, project background info and bios. Use the sample press release and add news of local individuals and organizations, event details, and other incentives and information to get media attention. Make sure you or another contact person listed can be quickly and easily reached.

**Download the Publicity Timeline in the Organizer's Toolkit section of our website.*



Chris and Richard practice movement piece. Photo Ava Johnson.

Second Meeting: Publicity and Screening Agenda

Remind committee members about the second meeting at least a week before, and ask them to RSVP. Summarize an agenda such as the one below:

Sample Agenda for Last Meeting before the Event

- **Publicity** –Pass out the printed flyers and evaluate publicity strategy. Ask committee members to add contacts to your list and for other places or organizations where flyers should be posted. Have other members of core publicity committee report on media coverage for the event.
- **Updated Info** – Discuss ideas and conversations committee members have had that advance inclusive arts possibilities.
- **Follow-up Action** – Brainstorming follow-up actions and discuss realistic next steps to take the inclusive arts initiative to the next level. Could you announce a focus group meeting at the screening event and invite folks to sign? If you will offer a post-screening workshop, be sure it is part of your publicity campaign and that you invite folks to register at the event. And finally, have easily accessible sign-up sheets for people who are moved by the film. Include space for interest, affiliation, email and phone number.
- **Panel Discussion** – A good simple action item is to have an expert panel guide discussion following the screening. A panel of three to five people with expertise in community arts, disability advocacy, inclusion, theater arts, or other areas can structure a discussion which focuses on issues and presents ideas for action. A facilitator should be chosen and discussion questions (See p. 14 for suggested Discussion Questions.) can guide the process.
- **Volunteer** – Identify 4 or more volunteers for the evening of the event.

Planning the Screening Event

The results of the discussion outlined above will determine what happens after the screening and what follow-up actions will be presented. The committee should finalize the agenda, determine length of post-film discussion, and select a host to welcome and introduce people.

A well-planned agenda will give participants the opportunity for a meaningful, perhaps life-changing experience at the screening, and the chance to make a difference in their community. Below is a sample agenda as a guide for your event.

The Big Day: Sample Agenda for Screening

We recommend that you allow a window of 2 hours for the screening event. Begin the program no more than 10 minutes after the posted time. This will give latecomers a chance to arrive without delaying the event too much.

Welcome and Introductions – (5-10 minutes) Introduce yourself, thank the audience for coming, and thank your community partners and co-organizers for their support. Briefly mention core themes of the film, introduce the campaign to inspire and inform inclusive arts, and identify your local project if there is one, and your own organization. Ask people to make a donation to *A New Kind of Listening's* grassroots campaign and/or to your local organization or project, and to sign-up for our e-newsletter. Inform them of the film's running time (57 minutes), how long the post discussion will last, and what time the event will be over. Invite people to stay for the discussion. Direct them to the sign-up table, the donation boxes, and the opportunity to buy DVD's. Ask everyone to turn off their cell phones.

Viewing the Film – (1 hour)

Facilitated Discussion and Q&A – (20-30 minutes)

Closing (5 minutes) Thank everyone again and ask people to get involved in the inclusive arts campaign by making a donation and signing up to get follow-up information about future meetings/events. If applicable, acknowledge inclusive arts successes in your and other communities. Finally, ask folks to email us comments, suggestions and ideas for future screenings at film@anewkindoflistening.com.

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Discussion Questions

The following screening questions are intended to guide dialogue and discussion around issues of inclusion and the arts. You may use one or more of these and/or compose your own questions. If you have invited panelists to guide discussion, they may help in creating questions to engage audience members.

- What are the core messages of *A New Kind of Listening*?
- How do you define inclusion and how is inclusion experienced and described in the film?
- The film shows one example of how the arts can create inclusive communities. Can you think of other forms of arts-based projects that can promote inclusion?
- Did the film change your perspective on the role of the arts in our lives and our diverse communities?
- Can you identify people and/or organizations locally who should see this film and who could join efforts to support inclusive arts experiences?
- How can you and others create opportunities for an inclusive arts project or strengthen and expand programs already in existence?
- What are three concrete steps you, local organizations, and the wider community can take to promote inclusive arts?



Laura Spray sharing some of her writing.

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One Week Before and Day of the Event

- **Venue Check** – Meet with tech person at the venue and run a test to check projection, sound, screen, image, captions, seating, and lighting. Confirm how you will access the building at least two hours prior to start-time. Make sure the accessible entrance, if it's not the main entrance, is well-lit, unlocked, and actually accessible.
- **Materials** – Some items you may need for your event include: 1 or 2 long tables, tablecloths, clipboards, a money box with cash/change, DVD's, t-shirts, buttons, pens, newsletter sign-up sheets. Bring tape, scissors, Sharpies, and blank poster board. Consider setting up a laptop if the site has WiFi so people can donate online, sign up for our e-mail list, and check out the website for resource info.
- **Volunteers** – 4 or more volunteers should arrive early to set-up and help at tables and in venue during event. Assign a volunteer to the accessible entrance as people are arriving for the film screening. Have another volunteer (or two) bring a camera to document event.
- **Arrivals** – Two people can be at the main table, one can assist with the accessible entrance and/or seating, and one can pass out programs, and be ready to turn down the lights.
- **Prepare for After Screening** – Assign one or two people to your sales table. Have one or two volunteers knowledgeable about the film and project at the sign-ups and donations table. Display information about your organization, and print and display a list of community partners and supporters of the event and the A New Kind of Listening grassroots tour. Finally, ask your table volunteers to listen in on post-film conversations, and take note of any good quotes or stories.



Theater groups in rehearsal. Photo Ava Johnson.

Post-Event Evaluation

The purpose of a final meeting of the organizing committee is to document and evaluate the event and the community-building process and to decide what will happen next.

- **Evaluation** – Have evaluation forms for the committee; or simply ask each person what worked well and what could have worked better.
- **Anecdotes** – Share stories from the evening and any photos that might be used in follow-up publicity and networking. Have committee members e-mail you quotable comments about the film, the event experience, and/or the community building process.
- **Share How it Went** – As an organizer, you are asked to report on the event and the community action process through the Working Films website or directly to us at film@anewkindoflistening.com. We appreciate your feedback and input and any ways you can help others organize successful programs. Please send us your photos, quotes and stories, some of which we can post on our Facebook Fan page and website blog.
- **Non-Profit Sponsor** – We hope a new inclusive arts group (or an idea for one) has started in your community. Local non-profits may be willing to support your new initiatives and serve as your fiscal sponsor, which allows you to receive tax-deductible donations.
- **Ongoing Support** – An important consideration is sustainability for your inclusive arts project. Perhaps the arts council in collaboration with a disability advocacy group or a faith institution would jointly commit to keeping the project going. Or maybe there are one or more individuals who have the energy and vision to keep it going, write grants, or research ways to support your efforts. In any case, this an important topic for the committee to address at this last meeting.

We hope this information is useful, and we welcome your feedback, suggestions or questions at film@anewkindoflistening.com.

Thank you again for being part of our grassroots inclusive arts campaign!

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Organizer Templates and Resources On Website

1. Detailed Publicity Timeline
2. Organizing Committee Invite
3. Save the Date Email Blast
4. Newsletter Announcement
5. Event Flyer PDF Template with Photos
6. Tickets for Event
7. Press Release Template
8. Email Invitation to Event
9. Event Program
10. Newsletter Sign-Up Sheet
11. Post-event evaluation

Additional Resources on Website

- Press Kit, Articles and News Archive
- Description of inclusive theater improv workshop
- Description and goals for 2 hour workshop for conferences and training
- Project Partners list and website links



Richard Reho and Megan Jones in touch exercise.