



*Meet Your Nonprofit, a weekly profile of nonprofit organizations in our community, is brought to you by the Center for Nonprofit Excellence.*

Describe your nonprofit's mission.

Light House Studio is an award-winning nonprofit filmmaking center that teaches children and teens to make movies. We work with dozens of professional artists and filmmakers to help our kids turn their ideas into movies they can see on big screen with family and friends. We partner with more than 50 other nonprofit organizations and schools each year to bring our unique arts education to children throughout our community. Since 1999 our mentors have helped kids create thousands of documentaries, dramas, and animated films, including many that have won prestigious awards, including a Peabody Award, a Gold World Medal at the New York Festivals International Television and Film Awards, and a CINE Golden Eagle (Steven Spielberg's first award).


What need in our community brought about the creation of your nonprofit?

Light House was founded seventeen years ago by a group of local filmmakers, artists, and educators who wanted to equip kids to tell their own stories and document the community from their point of view. Our founders also wanted students to learn the pervasive language of moving pictures so they could "speak" it themselves rather than being passive consumers.

Now that every smartphone is a camera and any kid can be a director, media literacy is more important than ever. Our students learn technical film skills like scriptwriting, lighting, cinematography, and editing but also life skills like leadership, collaboration, organization, and creativity. Children and teens are saturated with images and advertising, and Light House gives them the tools to navigate their digital environment.

How has your nonprofit made a difference in our community?

Beyond the more than 1,000 students we teach each year, one of the most visible ways we have contributed to our community recently is by reopening Vinegar Hill Theatre. For 35 years Vinegar Hill was Charlottesville's favorite arthouse cinema. After a long battle with the big chains, the theatre closed its doors for good in 2013. Last year we bought and renovated the theatre and reopened it for the public in June 2016. Now we host regular independent film screenings for the community, including showing our students' work and the films made by local, national, and international filmmakers.


 How can community members help you achieve your mission?

Our students benefit tremendously from working directly with filmmakers and artists, so we are always looking for qualified community members to mentor our kids. Students also love sitting in a packed theatre when the films they have created are screened at Vinegar Hill, so people should definitely come out to see our student films. You can find a list of all our upcoming independent and documentary screenings on our website. Parents of kids ages 8 to 18 can also explore the summer camps and year-round workshops we offer at our studio. And of course we are always happy to accept your donations for our programming or our ongoing Vinegar Hill Theatre campaign!

Tell us a story that has come out of your work.

We are really proud of our teen filmmakers and their work at this year's Virginia Film Festival. The Light House student film "Loop" won the Action! High School Director Competition and was shown to a sold-out house at the Paramount Theater before the closing night film "La La Land." Other Light House students competed against college and adult teams in the Adrenaline Film Project, where teams of three filmmakers write, cast, shoot, edit, and screen a short project. Mentors, the audience, and jury members all vote on-site, and our students' films won the Mentor Award, the Audience Award, and Best Actor award. It doesn't get better than seeing the skills our mentors work hard to instill paying off in such a big way.

Learn more about Light House Studio

 Meet Your Nonprofit is a special feature brought to you in partnership with Center for Nonprofit Excellence.

*Strengthening nonprofits to realize the potential of our community.*

Charlottesville Tomorrow's Community Voices

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Meet Your Nonprofit feature is to share information about the many local organizations working on behalf of a wide range of community interests. We encourage readers to contact the nonprofit directly for more information.