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World of first responders revealed

By Mark Pavilons

The public got a chance to see the world through the eyes of our first responders last week, during the debut of the documentary, ?The Other Side of the Hero.?

It was unveiled in Toronto at the Regent Theatre to an enthusiastic response.

This independent documentary, years in the making, takes us into that world of the first responder we rarely see: life out of uniform.

Actor and King resident Enrico Colantoni, who played Sgt. Greg Parker for five years on the international hit series Flashpoint, is the guide on this journey.

Viewers get to know first responders through their families, their spouses, their co-workers, and themselves; people who have experienced the flip-side of what can happen when a hero discovers that they are not emotionally immune to all that they deal with during their shifts.

The film is produced by Colantoni, Diana Warmé, and Karen Shopsowitz.

The documentary plunges viewers into the world of the first responder ?? you'll witness the excitement and bravado as these real life action heroes head out on a call. You'll see the camaraderie and dark humour back at the station, as you get to know first responders as people rather than just the uniform that they wear.

Colantoni's brother was a Toronto police officer, and because of his TV persona, first responders view him as one of their own.

In The Other Side of the Hero, you'll also meet Vince Savoia, former King resident and paramedic. Savoia had to quit his job after a traumatic call that changed his life. He now runs the Tema Conter Memorial Trust.

Several actors who portray first responders on TV are also featured in the documentary. These actors acknowledge the responsibility they have to inspire and inform audiences.

Some of the people in the documentary are Kevin Davison, a paramedic/musician from Nova Scotia, whose hit song ?When Those Sirens are Gone? has become an anthem for first responders; Halifax Police Chief J.M. Blais, who speaks boldly and honestly about his own battles with PTSD; Lisa Rouse, the Moncton dispatcher who took the nightmarish call of June 4, 2014, when three RCMP officers were killed; and Teresa Coulter, a Calgary paramedic whose done a series of paintings of fellow paramedics with PTSD.

Shopsowitz said the response at the screening was ?amazing,? with close to 400 attending. She pointed out the audience was a good mix of first responders, supporters and the general public.

She lauded Colantoni for his warm persona in the documentary. He turned interview questions into comfortable, personal conversations, which the audience loved.

She said they hope to do more screenings all across Canada. The movie was shown in Utah at a documentary film festival. It will also be shown during a one-day mental health film festival in New York in October.

It will also be shown by CBC on their documentary channel.

The trailer can be viewed here: https://vimeo.com/197944155

For more, visit https://www.theothersideofthehero.ca/