



ROUSE HILL

Marsden Park teen wins film festival award for deaf students

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Look out Stephen Spielberg, western Sydney has its own star filmmaker in Marsden Park teenager Jared Donaldson.

The 16-year-old is paving the way for young, hearing-impaired Australians after taking out two awards at this year's Hear For You Film Festival.

Jared and his team received awards for Best Director and Best Story for their film *Hidden Heroes*, which explores the themes of friendship and standing up to bullies.

The festival received entries from deaf and hard of hearing high school students from across Australia, with the awards handed down at a special premiere screening at Sydney's Golden Age Cinema last month.



📷 Jared Donaldson and his team took home awards for Best Director and Best Story at this year's Hear For You Film Festival for hearing-impaired teenagers. Picture: Angelo Velardo

The Wyndham College student said the win was one of his proudest moments.

“I feel really proud of myself and that I can accomplish anything if I put my mind to it,” Jared said.

“This film means that I can do anything and it shows how much I can believe in myself.”

Jared, who is also knocking down barriers in the sporting arena, hoped his success would inspire other young people living with hearing loss.

“I feel that my successes in both filmmaking and tenpin bowling show that you can achieve anything — that having hearing loss is not a barrier to success,” he said.

“I like to share my experiences with other hearing-impaired teens so that they can also succeed.”



 Budding filmmaker Jared Donaldson hopes his success will inspire other hearing-impaired teenagers to pursue their dreams. Picture: Angelo Velardo

Hear for You chief executive David Brady said improving the lives of deaf teenagers was at the heart of the festival.

“Life is hard enough for teenagers and if you’re deaf it can be even harder,” Mr Brady said. “Often we find deaf teenagers are isolated and don’t take part in activities such as filmmaking in school because they aren’t able to keep up with their hearing peers.

“Programs such as this film festival help to validate the young deaf person’s worth, improve self-esteem, networks and provide ‘lived’ experiences that teenagers can relate to.”