

Walmart and Bentonville Film Festival are BFFs – Q/A with Brittney Duke  
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Image

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By Matt Smith, Walmart Corporate Affairs

*It's [Bentonville Film Festival](#) Week, and there's a buzz all over town about celebrity sightings and film events. But, this is not just a festival for movie fans - BFF has a mission to influence mainstream media to increase diversity in content. I had a chance to catch up with Brittney Duke, Walmart VP of Marketing, to talk about what separates this film fest from the rest.*

**Matt:** Ok, we're rolling. (See what I did there?) This is the fifth year for the Bentonville Film Festival. How long has Walmart been involved?

**Brittney:** Since the very beginning! We believed so strongly in what [Geena \(Davis\) wanted to do](#) that we jumped in year one.

**MS:** What's different about BFF in comparison to other film fests?

**BD:** Inclusion and equality are top of mind - BFF is focused on increasing diversity in film, media and content. All the films, panels, discussions and key events are focused on increasing the number of women and people of diversity in the industry. We also bring together some of the top brands and networks to help in this important cause. It's the trifecta of content, media dollars and platforms that can drive real change in inclusion.

The festival is also committed to distribution for its top winners through key partnerships with [AMC Theatres](#), [Lifetime TV](#) and [Vudu](#) - last year, 87% of the films received some form of release.

**MS:** Let's talk about some movies. There are a couple of films that look fascinating to me, like the [documentary about Alice Guy-Blaché](#) - a pioneering early twentieth century director lost to history.

**Is there one film that you are looking forward to seeing this week?**

**BD:** So many – where to start! [Carol of the Bells](#) will pull on your heart strings big time as we follow a man searching to learn more about the family he didn't know! Geena is also premiering [This Changes Everything](#), a documentary she executive produced and is featured in looking at the systemic issues around inclusion in film. I could go on and on...

**MS: The festival has a great mix of family events and serious, thought-provoking films. Can you tell us how you've worked to make BFF a family event and a world-class film festival at the same time?**

**BD:** It is important that we have content that is thought-provoking and entertaining, world-class and moving. And, of course inclusivity also means people of all ages are welcome! Diversity and inclusion is being talked about at family dinner tables, so BFF is just a direct extension of that conversation with our associates and customers.

I also think younger generations see the world differently – and we can learn from them! One of the panels I'm most excited about is *Ride to Freedom* on Friday at 2 p.m. Sheldon Candis, a filmmaker, created a series of short films telling the history of African Americans –through conversation with five high school students. I had the opportunity to watch the shorts and wow, the students are so insightful! Doug will be hosting this one – all associates are welcome!

**MS: This festival has turned into a real celebration of diversity. Why is an event like this important?**

**BD:** To bring awareness to the progress that's still needed, including its challenges, and to create a platform for amazing talent. You will be blown away by the caliber of talent, ideas and creativity – and unfortunately because of the systemic issues, these individuals don't always get recognized. Creating a platform to experience and learn is essential.

**MS: The themes in BFF fit right into the conversations we have been having internally about films like [The Hate U Give](#). Do you feel events like BFF can expand these conversations to a larger audience?**

**BD:** I sure hope so – conversation, empathy and awareness can help us all make greater progress together.

**MS: Ok, knowing what you know about events and (\*ahem\*) celebrities, what is the one “can't miss” event to attend?**

**BD:** One of the unique aspects of BFF is the proximity to our VIPs – so you never know who you might see and where – at any of the events, or just having coffee on the square or at the Walmart Museum. The studio premiers are always especially exciting!

**MS: What other inside tips can you give us about going to BFF?**

**BD:** Bring your friends. Come to as many events as you can to learn and be entertained. And, most importantly, dress comfortably! Don't forget to check out BFF's website ([www.bentonvillefilmfestival.com](http://www.bentonvillefilmfestival.com)), so you can plan ahead.

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