

# The Telegram

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Film

## Welcome to the show

Empire Theatres makes it easier for hard of hearing, deaf audiences

Danette Dooley

As a movie lover and a person with a hearing loss, Myrtle Barrett is delighted that Empire Theatres is offering the new Hollywood film "Evan Almighty" at Studio 12 in St. John's in open caption.

"I am late deafened, which means that I no longer get to hear music or enjoy a movie with my friends. I have to wait for the DVD to come out and watch the captioned version all on my own as, by then, my friends have already seen it. It makes me feel left out," Barrett says via e-mail.

Seventeen-year-old Nicole Marsh is severe to profoundly deaf in both ears and has been attending the Newfoundland School for the Deaf for the past six years.

"I've been deaf since the age of six caused by a condition called Enlarged Vestibular Aqueduct Syndrome. Lip reading came naturally for me, but it didn't make up for the interaction lost by being limited to one-on-one conversations or small groups," she says via e-mail.

"While my family tried to involve me, it wasn't always easy."

After transferring to the Newfoundland School for the Deaf, Marsh began learning sign language and more about deaf culture.

As an advocate for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, she's simply asking for equality that everyone deserves, she says.

The showing of "Evan Almighty" in open caption is a big breakthrough, she says.

"It means that we can go to the theatre with our families and friends and laugh at the same things that they laugh at, cry for the same reasons they cry."

Dean Leland, vice-president of marketing for Empire Theatres says that only a "handful" of films are available in this country in open caption.

"Very, very few movies have this option which is a shame. But it's a reality. So, whenever we're able to lock into being able to get one, we're going to grab it," Leland says during a recent telephone interview.

The best way, he says, to ensure more movies become available in open caption is for movie goers to "vote with their feet."

"Having people buy the tickets is the sure fire way for us to be able to show the various film studios that there is a market for it and that people will support it."

"Evan Almighty" features big names such as Steve Carrell, John Goodman and Morgan Freeman.

Barrett, who is also president of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association Newfoundland and Labrador (CHHA-NL), says she'll be at Studio 12 this weekend with a group of friends and encourages others with hearing loss to get out and support the initiative.

"This is a trial run and we need to show Empire Theatres that we are out there and we will be at the movies," Barrett says.

The movie will be shown at Empire Studio 12 in St. John's today, Sunday, Monday and Wednesday. For information on show times call Empire Theatres Movie Line at 758-3456. Tickets can also be purchased online by visiting [www.empiretheatres.com](http://www.empiretheatres.com).

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**Figure:**

Empire Theatres in St. John's will screen the open caption version of "Evan Almighty" this weekend for deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences. - Photo by The Associated Press

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