



The crowd at Back Stage's Actorfest NY 2010.

Guild and Foundation Take Part in Actorfest New York

October 2 was a busy day for many actors in New York City. While the rest of the city was just waking, thousands of actors lined the block around 34th Street and 8th Avenue waiting for the doors of Manhattan Center Studios at Hammerstein Ballroom to open for *Back Stage's* 18th annual Actorfest NY. Actorfest brings together a wide range of industry resources for the benefit of actors and their careers. Both Screen Actors Guild and the SAG Foundation were in attendance in the event's exhibitor hall.

For the first time, this year's event featured an NBC casting session for members of SAG and AFTRA exclusively, which led to an increase in the number of union members in attendance.

The SAG booth was the site of a lot of activity. Members picked up information about iActor and the SAG Motion Picture Players Welfare Fund. Young performers, who had a casting session just for them, stopped by for copies of the *Young Performers Handbook*. Non-members visited the table to ask the most popular question of the day, "How do I qualify to join Screen Actors Guild?"

New York Division Board Member Kevin Scullin, a MORE Committee member, was on hand to answer that very question. He said he has found that reaching out to actors early in their careers has helped build up a well-educated community of future members. "I have met several actors over the course of the years while I assisted at

Actorfest who asked about membership and have since become members in good standing," Scullin said. "It is very gratifying to be able to communicate to actors—current and future members—what the union can and cannot do, to correct any misconceptions that people have about union membership, to explain the importance of being a member if you are committed to this profession, and to educate about the additional benefits of union membership besides its work protections and health and pension plans."

Some of these additional benefits include programs sponsored by the SAG Foundation, which was also on hand to spread the word about who they are and what they do. SAG Foundation staff and volunteers distributed literature about the free programs, which have helped countless actors seeking career planning and advisement. An on-site computer station made registration easy and immediate for SAGFoundation.org and the SAG Foundation's newsletters. Hundreds of attendees signed up as volunteers for the organization's BookPALS program and other efforts.

The SAG Foundation credits *Back Stage* for the opportunity to reach the greater community through programs such as the series "Back Stage at the SAG Foundation" on the second Wednesday of every month. The program is streamed live and then archived on SAGFoundation.org. Members may also access copies of *Back Stage* at the panel series and at the 12th floor reception desk at SAG's New York office.