Many of us take school for granted, getting through it without realizing its massive impact. *Night School* sheds light on students fighting not only for knowledge but for their lives. The film resonates strongly now, as unfit politicians pose a palpable threat to our country's education system.

Directed by award-winning filmmaker Andrew Cohn, *Night School* dazzled audiences upon its debut at the Tribeca Film Festival, and it went on to win Best Documentary Feature last year at the Heartland Film Festival. This poignant documentary portrait takes us inside one of The Excel Center program's central Indiana locations, deep in the heart of the city near 38th Street. Rather than offering GED courses, the program gives students a chance to graduate with a traditional Core 40 diploma.

The film follows three students: Greg Henson, a 30-year-old former drug dealer; Shynika Jakes, a 26-year-old mother of four; and Melissa Lewis, a 53-year-old driven to prove that it's not too late to achieve the goals that drifted away from her decades ago.

Cohn gets up close and personal, capturing indelibly intimate moments with these people. We see Greg working on algebra homework in the hospital as his daughter is being treated after an epileptic seizure. And we follow Shynika as she joins fellow fast food employees in a protest for livable wages. Cohn's camera also closes in on the devastating look of disappointment that spreads across Melissa's face when she discovers she has to repeat a class.

Nothing seems staged or manipulative here. All of these moments emerge organically and feel achingly real, reminding us of the magic in documentary filmmaking.

*Night School* will have an encore Heartland screening as part of the traveling *Heartland Film Roadshow* program. It's playing at Butler University's Schrott Center for the Arts next week on February 20 at 7 p.m. Cohn will be there for a Q&A after the film, along with some of the documentary's subjects. This is a powerful, important film you won't want to miss.