



advancing awareness of obsessive-compulsive disorders

PO Box 8115, Nottingham NG7 1YT.

Tel: 0870 126 9506

Email: admin@ocduk.org

News release

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Aviator star DiCaprio touches down at charity event

Hollywood superstar Leonardo DiCaprio put in a surprise appearance at a charity screening of his latest film - an event which has raised cash towards starting the UK's first round the clock helpline for people affected by obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

Invited guests were stunned when Hollywood film boss Harvey Weinstein introduced the star of *The Aviator*, who paid a flying visit to a special preview, held on the eve of the film's premiere in London yesterday (Sunday).

Mr DiCaprio stars as billionaire aviation pioneer and movie tycoon Howard Hughes, whose life was blighted by obsessional fears of germs and contamination.

"We were already overwhelmed by the generosity of Miramax, the film's makers, in allowing us the honour of this special screening," said Ashley Fulwood, chief executive of OCD-UK.

"Harvey and Leonardo's appearance was a totally unexpected bonus, and it put the seal on a wonderful evening. I'm pleased to say that as a result of the event, we are able to announce that the UK's first ever 24-seven helpline for sufferers and their families will open in 2005."

Mr DiCaprio told the audience of 100 guests, which included UK film producers and directors, actors, leading OCD experts and OCD-UK members, that he and director Martin Scorsese had been fascinated by Howard Hughes's driving obsessions, and that he had worked particularly hard to understand OCD and portray it accurately.

He said: "I hope I can do justice to the suffering that Hughes endured from obsessive-compulsive disorder."

Mr DiCaprio was coached in his role by OCD expert Dr Jeffrey Schwartz, who is a medical advisor to OCD-UK.

Mr Fulwood added: 'Guests who suffer from this often debilitating condition said afterwards that his portrayal was absolutely amazing and extremely realistic.'

The charity preview, held at the luxury Soho Hotel in London's West End, was also sponsored by Percol, the specialist tea and coffee importers.

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Media contacts:

For further information about this news release, please contact Stephen Saunders on 0796 358 1129 or Penny Burrows on 0797 386 3263

Note to editors:

OCD-UK is a brand new, dynamic national charity for people affected by obsessive-compulsive disorder. It aims to bring the facts about OCD to the UK public, and to support those who suffer in silence from this often debilitating anxiety disorder. For further information about the charity's work and OCD, call 0870 126 9506 or go to www.ocduk-org