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JCCs work together on disabilities film festival

by **Aaron Leibel**
Arts Editor

A grant from a foundation will enable the three area Jewish community centers to educate Washington-area Jews about disabilities while **working together** on the project. Area JCC officials have all used the word "excited" to demonstrate their commitment.

Each JCC will receive a \$4,000 grant to promote the screening of the ReelAbilities: The NY Disabilities Film Festival. The festival will take place in the first week of February at venues in the three jurisdictions of the JCCs.

"It is a project that is starting from the ground up, and we all have the opportunity to **work** on it from the beginning," says Marc Jacob, the assistant executive director of the JCC of Northern Virginia in Fairfax. "That prospect appeals to all of us, and we look forward to **working together**."

Tracey Dorfmann, chief program officer at the JCC of Greater Washington in Rockville, concurs. She is happy about the prospect of collaborating with her counterparts "all the way down the line" and thus "setting a real precedent," she says. Representatives of the three JCCs have met three times so far and will get **together** once a month and more frequently as the time of the festival approaches, she says.

"We are making decisions jointly on ticketing, marketing and on the opening ceremonies," Dorfmann says. "There is an overall marketing plan that we are **working on together**. The CEOs have met and are supportive of the collaboration."

There will be a joint opening night at the Avalon Theater in the District. Each JCC will show four or five films in their respective areas, chosen from a master list provided by the ReelAbilities Festival. On closing night, all three centers will screen the same film.

Of course, it is not only the act of **working together**, but also the substance of the collaboration - disabled people - that has ignited their enthusiasm. The films cover a wide range of disabilities, including wounded soldiers, blind people, people suffering from autism, says Susan Barocas, director of the Washington Jewish Film Festival at the WDCJCC.

"The idea is to increase public awareness," she says. "What's great is that we are bringing important films here and **working together**."

The festival, which has been presented for three years in New York, is going on the road, says Jeffrey P. Harris chair of the Saul Schottenstein Foundation B, which is funding the effort. The festival will be in Cincinnati Oct. 1, then it is going to Atlanta before Washington and Boston, he says.

So far, it is slated to be shown in 10 cities.

"We believe that the festival lets people experience an important Jewish value of acceptance, the interconnection, the oneness of all people," he says.

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