



**Berks
Arts
Council**



BERKS ARTS COUNCIL ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF HIDDEN RIVER FILM INITIATIVE

Greater Reading Film Festival Gets New Identity

Reading, PA—Berks Arts Council announced that the Greater Reading Film Festival has changed its name to Hidden River Film Initiative. The name change is accompanied by programming changes that include an increased focus on independent film, local filmmakers, and education.

The Hidden River Film Initiative's new name and direction was developed by the festival's founders and programming committee during a recent strategic planning process. The name Hidden River refers to the Initiative's location along the banks of the Schuylkill River and Reading's rich history as a river town. Arendt Corsen of the Dutch West India Company, the first European to discover the river, gave it the Dutch name Schuylkill, which is said to translate to "hidden river."

"The planning process not only resulted in the Hidden River Film Initiative's new name, but it also generated a lot of exciting new ideas," said Berks Arts Council Executive Director Karen Haver. "The concept behind an 'initiative' is a year-round presence with educational activities as well as opportunities to view small independent films. We hope audience members develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of film through the Initiative's programming.

Hidden River Film Initiative founding committee member and Co-Chair Harry Serio added, "Our committee members come from varied backgrounds, but they are united by their devotion to film. Much of the discussion over the past few months focused on how best to share that love of film with the Berks County community."

The Initiative's first venture will be the return of the "Night of Independent Film" series previously presented by the Film Festival. This monthly film series is set to debut on Wednesday, February 19, 2014, at 7:00 p.m. at R/C Reading Movies 11 & IMAX in downtown Reading. The series is planned for the third Wednesday of every month and will focus on independent and local films that audiences in the Greater Reading area may not have an opportunity to view on the big screen otherwise. The following are the first three films slated to begin the series:

***Escape from Tomorrow* - February 19 at 7:00 p.m.**

A fantasy-psychological thriller shot guerilla-style at Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom and Disneyland theme parks. Directed by Randy Moore. www.EscapeFromTomorrow.com

***Martino Unstrung* – March 19 at 7:00 p.m.**

Explores the nature of memory and personal identity while following jazz guitar virtuoso Pat Martino and his journey to recover from amnesia resulting from life-saving brain surgery. Directed by Ian Knox.

www.MartinoUnstrung.com

***Deaf Jam* – April 16 at 7:00 p.m.**

Looks at deaf culture, a New York City teen's introduction to American Sign Language (ASL) poetry, and a

collaboration/performance duet leading to a new form of slam poetry that speaks to both the hearing and the Deaf. Directed by Judy Lieff. www.DeafJam.org

Screenings for the monthly series will also feature special guests such as industry professionals involved in creating the film and panel discussions with experts on the film's topic. Future programming under consideration for the initiative includes workshops on topics such as screenwriting and acting for film, the return of the film festival component and outdoor family films during the summer months.

The Greater Reading Film Festival originated in 2006 with a commitment to bring quality independent, international, student and local films to the attention of Greater Reading's residents and film aficionados.

About the Berks Arts Council:

The mission of the Berks Arts Council is to cultivate, support, and promote the arts in our community through collaboration, education, and presentation. In addition to the Hidden River Film Initiative, the Berks Arts Council presents the Bandshell Concert Series, Berks Jazz Fest, Fast Lane Art, and Pagoda Awards, administers the Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts Re-Granting Program, and provides art exhibition and marketing opportunities for member artists. Visit www.BerksArts.org for more information.

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