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**Fifth Annual ReelAbilities Boston Film Festival Widens a Lens on Relationships, Love, Sports, and Adventure**

**in the Disabilities World**

**NEWTON, MA** – March 7, 2016 – The Fifth Annual ReelAbilities Boston Film Festival, April 3 - 14, continues to grow with 17 screenings in 14 venues across Massachusetts.

“I am so excited about our 5th annual Festival line-up,” says Mara Bresnahan, Festival Director. “These powerful, engaging films and prestigious guests are in-line with our goal of making ReelAbilities a go-to event across greater Boston for people of all abilities. We feel honored to bring into conversation a variety of topics in the disability community as we help foster awareness about our shared human experience.”

This year, the Festival offers a variety of compelling, entertaining, and enlightening stories that cover a range of human emotions and experiences from the trials and triumphs of relationships and sports, to travel and rollicking fun.

**FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS**

**Special Event**

***Transfatty Lives,*** directed by Patrick O’Brien. At 30, Patrick O’Brien was TransFatty, a New York City DJ, internet personality, and filmmaker. Then his legs started shaking. TransFatty Lives takes you on an emotional rollercoaster into the dark heart of ALS. As the director and star of his own documentary, Patrick films every step of his debilitating journey from first diagnosis through paralysis. Forcefully lacking self-pity, he captures the emotion, humor, and absurdity of life as he makes art, gets political, falls in love, fathers a son, and fights depression. Winner of the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival. Reception to follow with Director and Film Subject Patrick O'Brien Tickets $20 each at www.reelboston.org All proceeds benefit the Patrick O’Brien Foundation. Presented by the Chelsea Jewish Foundation. **Sunday, April 3, 10:00am, Showcase Cinema Revere.**

 **FILM HIGHLIGHTS: Love and Relationships**

* **OPENING NIGHT: The Way He Looks,** Directed by Daniel Ribeiro. **Narrative**. In this romantic and gentle coming-of-age story, Leo, a blind teenager, is determined to leave Sao Paolo to study abroad– to the dismay of his best friend, Giovana. But Leo’s plans change when he is paired on a school project with Gabriel, the handsome new kid in town. As the boys’ interest in each other grows, Giovana begins to reveal her own feelings, growing increasingly jealous of Gabriel. Discussion to follow with Director Daniel Ribeiro. Free admission, suggested donation of $10. **Monday, April 4, 6:30pm, Emerson College, Boston.**
* **CLOSING NIGHT: *How to Dance in Ohio,*** Directed by Alexandra Shiva. **Documentary**. A first kiss, a first dance. These rites of passage can be exciting and terrifying, but for many teenagers and young adults on the autism spectrum, they are debilitating. In *How to Dance in Ohio*, we join a group of young people with developmental challenges as they prepare for their first formal dance. From practicing social skills to picking dates and dresses, the teens develop their ability to connect, navigate social rules, and take part in a longstanding American tradition – the spring dance. **Premiered at the Sundance Film Festival**. Discussion to follow with film subject Dr. Amigo, Founder and Director of Amigo Family Counseling and Karen Lean, Board Member of Asperger/Autism Network. Tickets $10 each. **Thursday, April 14, 7:00pm, Somerville Theatre.**
* ***Mimi and Dona,*** directed by Sophie Sartain. **Documentary**. For the past 64 years, 92-year-old Mimi has cared for her daughter Dona, who has an intellectual disability. For Mimi, aging means facing the reality that she will not outlive her daughter. This personal and touching film by **Executive Producer Nancy Spielberg** (*Above and Beyond*) spotlights the challenges confronting aging caregivers of those with disabilities and details the ripple effects of Dona’s disability on three generations of a Texas family. Pre-screening reception 6:00-6:30pm. Discussion to follow with Director Sophie Sartain and Susan Pacheco, Executive Director Cambridge Council on Aging. Free admission. **Tuesday, April 5, 6:00pm, Cambridge Public Library.**
* ***Autism in Love,*** directed by Matt Fuller. **Documentary.** Finding love can be hard for anyone, but for those with autism the challenges may seem overwhelming. Autism can affect the core characteristics of a successful relationship – communication and social interaction. Filmed in a highly personal style, Autism in Love offers a warm and stereotype-shattering look at four people pursuing and managing romantic relationships. Pre-screening dessert reception 6:45-7:15pm. Discussion to follow. Pre-registration strongly advised at bostonjcc.org/reelabilities. Free admission. **Thursday, April 7, 6:45pm, Leventhal-Sidman JCC, Newton.**
* ***Do You Believe in Love?*** Directed by Dan Wasserman. **Documentary**. Tova does not believe in love. But she has had remarkable success as a matchmaker, specializing in finding matches for people with disabilities. Despite her tough-love approach, her passion for her work and her clients is undeniable. Funny, heart-warming, and endlessly entertaining, this documentary follows Tova, who has muscular dystrophy, over the course of a year, inviting us to join in her pain, humor, love and enormous lust for life. A favorite at the 2015 Boston Jewish Film Festival. Discussion to follow with Alexander Freeman, Disability Advocate. Free admission. **Sunday, April 10, 3:00pm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.**
* ***Gabriel,*** directed by Lou Howe.**Narrative*.*** Gabriel (Rory Culkin) longs for stability and happiness amidst an ongoing struggle with a mental illness and is convinced that reuniting with his ex-girlfriend is the key. In a desperate and increasingly obsessive pursuit, Gabriel tests the limits of his family as his inner demons begin to close in around him. Discussion to follow facilitated by Goldie Eder, MSW Dr. Dost Öngür, MD, PHD Chief Psychotic Disorders Division McLean Hospital, Associate Professor of Psychiatry Harvard Medical School Kirsten Bolton, LICSW Program Director, McLean On Track. Free admission. **Sunday, April 10, 12:00pm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.**

**FILM HIGHLIGHTS: Sports**

* ***Endless Abilities,* directed by Harvey Burrell and Tripp Clemens. Documentary.** A road trip documentary following three best friends driving across the country in search of adaptive sports for people with physical disabilities. On their journey, the friends encounter incredible athletes with a range of physical abilities and they join them in swimming, playing competitive soccer, rock climbing, and more. Discussion to follow with Eli A. Wolff, Director of the Inclusive Sports Initiative at the Institute for Human Centered Design and Film Producer Will Humphrey. Free admission. **Wednesday, April 13, 6:30pm, Museum of Science, Boston.**
* ***The Crash Reel*, directed by Lucy Walker.Documentary.** This film chronicles the jaw-dropping story of pro snowboarder Kevin Pearce through the powerful use of 20 years of sports and vérité footage. The Crash Reel captures the epic rivalry between Kevin and Shaun White and its culmination in Kevin’s life-changing crash. As Kevin works his way back to the slopes, we are introduced to his father, glass artist Simon Pearce, and his brother, David Pearce, who struggles to accept his Down syndrome. Winner of the Audience Award at the SXSW Film Festival. Light reception to follow. Free admission. **Wednesday, April 13, 6:30pm, Marlborough High School.**
* ***The Finishers,*** directed by Nils Tavernier. **Narrative**. In a bid to bond with his distant father, Julien, a charming 17-yearold with cerebral palsy, challenges him to compete together in the Ironman triathlon–a near impossible feat. This is not just a sports film, but a story of one family’s exemplary journey and a portrait of the love between father and son. **Based on the legendary Boston Marathoners Rick and Dick Hoyt.** All ages are welcome. Free admission. **Thursday, April 14, 7:00pm, Springfield JCC.**

**ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS**

For Fun and Adventure!

* ***Teach Me To Sea***, directed by Mara Bresnahan. **Documentary**. *Teach Me to Sea* follows students from the Perkins School for the Blind on an ambitious five-day senior class cruise to Mexico. The film follows the students through the end of their time in high school, including important senior rites of passage such as prom and graduation. *Teach Me to Sea* captures their hopes, fears, and dreams for the future as they head out into the world beyond Perkins and into the beginning of their adult lives. Discussion to follow with Director Mara Bresnahan and Film Subject Ashley Bernard. Free admission. **Friday, April 8, 10:00am, Cardinal Cushing Centers, Hanover.**
* ***Becoming Bulletproof,*** directed by Michael Barnett. **Documentary**. A diverse group of people with disabilities from across the U.S. takes on leading roles in a magical, rip-roaring, costume-drama Western, filmed on vintage Hollywood locations. This riveting film-within-a-film immerses us in a dynamic, inclusive world, raising questions about why we so rarely see real actors with disabilities on the “big screen.” Pre-screening reception 6:00-7:00pm. Discussion to follow with film subjects AJ Murray and Peter Halby. Free admission. **Tuesday, April 12, 7:15pm, Cotting School, Lexington.**
* ***For Once in My Life,*** directed by Jim Bigham. **Documentary.** A unique group of singers and musicians, on a journey to show the world the greatness — and killer soundtrack — within each of them. The twenty-eight band members have a wide range of mental and physical disabilities, as well as musical abilities that extend into ranges of pure genius. Winner of the Audience Award at the SXSW Film Festival. Live pre-show radio interview with band members starting at 6:00pm and streaming on [www.radioperkins.org](http://www.radioperkins.org). Free admission. **Monday, April 11, 6:30pm, Perkins School for the Blind, Watertown.**

**TICKETS AND VENUES**

All screenings are free admission with the exception of our Special Event: *Transfatty Lives,* Sunday, April 3, tickets $20; Breakfast at Ina’s, Wednesday, April 6, tickets are $12; and How To Dance In Ohio, Closing Night, Thursday, April 14, tickets are $10. Reservations for all other films are recommended but not required. To purchase tickets or make reservations go to [www.reelboston.org](http://www.reelboston.org/%22%20%5Co%20%22This%20external%20link%20will%20open%20in%20a%20new%20window%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). Tickets may also be purchased in person at the box office one hour prior to screening.

This year, ReelAbilities Boston Film Festival will screen in 14 venues across Massachusetts, including Boston, Cambridge, Hanover, Holyoke, Lexington, Marlborough, Newton, Revere, Somerville, Springfield, and Watertown.

**PARTNERS AND MISSION**

Festival director Bresnahan adds, “At the heart of our Boston Festival is a growing and diverse group of more than 60 host and community partners, including world-class educational institutions, dedicated disability-specific organizations, and vital advocacy and networking organizations.  Boston is home to a number of unique and innovative organizations in the disability field, such as the Ruderman Family Foundation, The Chelsea Jewish Foundation, and the Special Olympics of Massachusetts. The Festival is a place to come together, including people of all abilities.”

ReelAbilities Boston Film Festival 2016 is presented in partnership with: Chelsea Jewish Foundation, Combined Jewish Philanthropies, CVS Health, Diane Troderman, Emerson College, J.B. &  Z.B Butler Foundation, Mass Cultural Council, Nancy Lurie Marks Family Foundation, the Ruderman Family Foundation, and Special Olympics of Massachusetts.

According to the United States Census, one in five Americans has a disability. ReelAbilities is dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with different disabilities from a variety of communities.

The ReelAbilities Boston Film Festival is co-presented by The Boston Jewish Film Festival. ReelAbilities is the largest disabilities film festival in the United States with 14 festivals in cities across the country.

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