ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York Moves Forward as a Virtual Fest

A statement from the ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York

New York, NY, (March 17, 2020) – In light of the current COVID-19 recommendations, the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan’s ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York has decided to shift the planned festival from a live public event to a virtual format in partnership with Vimeo A11y. The festival will run on its planned dates of March 31 to April 6th.

Isaac Zablocki, the director of ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York said, "We feel that these stories still need to be told and that creating community is as important as ever. For the first time ever, we will present the majority of our films, Q+As, and conversations online. We believe this will allow us to advance our mission of accessibility, making our films and conversations available to our community at times when gathering together in person is not possible."

Films will be available online for 24 hours beginning at the scheduled start time and Q+As with filmmakers and guests will take place after the film’s first screening concludes. Films will still be fully accessible, presented with open captions and audio description. Q+As and panels will be broadcast in interactive livestream with captioning.

Please check the ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York website at reelabilities.org/newyork beginning Thursday, March 19, for the complete list of films and events that will take place virtually.

Yaara Kedem, the associate director of ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York, said, "We will continue to provide a platform to support our filmmakers and phenomenal films and to develop our community at a time in which fewer options are available. Filmmakers who are now experiencing many cancellations of their screenings worldwide have been thrilled with this new direction, and are supportive in our efforts to make their films available to ReelAbilities audiences. The current coronavirus restrictions are a doorway to new opportunities for us to be even more accessible and reach a wider
audience. We offer a chance to connect at a time of solitude by bringing these films into people’s homes and allowing further interaction via livestreamed Q+As and panels."

**Rabbi Joy Levitt**, the executive director of the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, said, "Because so much of our work at our buildings is about bringing people together, this feels like the right time to think out of the box (quite literally) and serve our community beyond our buildings."

**About ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York**
ReelAbilities Film Festival is the largest film festival in the world dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities. Founded in New York in 2007 by the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, the festival presents award-winning films by and about people with disabilities in multiple locations throughout the city. Post-screening discussions and other engaging programs bring communities together to explore, discuss, embrace, and celebrate the diversity of our shared human experience. The New York festival is the launching pad for an international program and its selections run satellite ReelAbilities festivals in over 20 cities worldwide. Learn more at ny.reelabilities.org.

**About the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan**
Together with its community, the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan creates opportunities for people to connect, grow, and learn within an ever-changing Jewish landscape. Located on 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, the JCC is a vibrant non-profit community center on the Upper West Side. The cornerstone of progressive programming in Manhattan, the JCC serves over 55,000 people annually through 1,200 programs each season that educate, inspire, and transform participants' minds, bodies, and spirits. Since its inception, the JCC has been committed to serving the community by offering programs, classes, and events that extend beyond neighborhood boundaries, reaching people at all stages of their lives. Learn more at jccmanhattan.org.

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