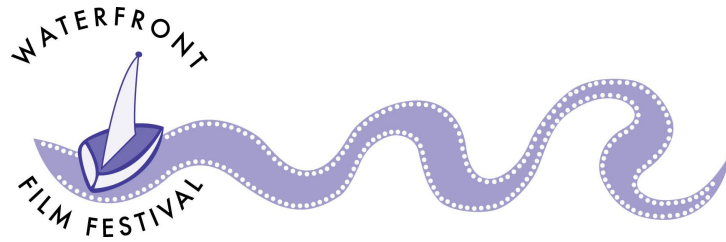


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Waterfront Film Festival to expand

Annual event may alternate among Michigan lakeshore towns

Saugatuck, Michigan, Sept. 4, 2012 – After 14 years of hosting world-class independent film in the resort town of Saugatuck, Mich., organizers for Waterfront Film Festival have begun discussions that would take the event to multiple locations.

“Our mission has always been for Waterfront to economically and artistically benefit the entire region of West Michigan, as well as to showcase its scenic beauty and wonderful way of life” said Hopwood DePree, co-founder of the non-profit festival.

The Festival, typically held in June, plans to move every other year to different locations in West Michigan, allowing additional waterfront communities to host the event.

“We’re not ruling out Saugatuck for 2013, we’re just opening up the possibility for other towns,” DePree said. “We still consider Saugatuck our home and look forward to holding Waterfront there again.”

DePree said festival organizers have received many requests in recent years to share what Waterfront has to offer with other communities in West Michigan.

“This feels like a natural progression that allows the event to evolve in a fresh way that benefits a greater number of businesses in a larger area,” DePree said.

Waterfront Film Festival started in 1999, and turned a rather lazy early-summer weekend into an annual pilgrimage for 16,000 filmmakers and film fans. The festival has premiered hundreds of independent shorts, features and documentaries, and has been named in Screen Actors Guild magazine by SAGIndie as one of the top five film festivals in the world, alongside Sundance and Cannes.

DePree said he and other organizers will continue talks with city officials and potential partners, including in Saugatuck, before agreeing on a location for the 15th annual event in June. A final decision will be based on capital commitments, available resources and community enthusiasm for hosting the festival.

Proposals from host cities can be submitted to sponsorship@waterfrontfilm.org by Sept. 14, or by June 2013 for the following year's event.

Each year the festival shows about 70 dramas, comedies, documentaries and shorts. In addition, it screens a Michigan Showcase, organizes and conducts seminars, provides speaking panels and post-film Q&As with cast and crew.

New locations for the festival would carry many of the characteristics Waterfront patrons enjoy in Saugatuck: Scenic and walkable with open park space, art and leisure-based local business, engaging eateries and nightlife, and great places to stay.

Waterfront organizers said the outpouring of support from sponsors, volunteers and audience members who have said they will follow the festival has been tremendous.

“This decision was crucial for the event to evolve and survive in these challenging economic times that have taken their toll on nearly every non-profit organization,” DePree said. “This will definitely keep things exciting.”

About Waterfront Film Festival

Now in its 15th year, Waterfront Film Festival celebrates independent film and filmmakers in a non-competitive environment. Located on the shores of Lake Michigan., WFF is one of the leading destination film festivals in the Midwest, regularly hosting Midwest premieres of Academy Award-winning and nominated documentaries. Recognized as a top five film festival, WFF is a non-profit event committed to creating a “middle coast” venue for independent filmmakers while further enhancing the artistic draw of West Michigan.

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