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# **Bucks Fever FilmFest**

## **Where Genius Emerges**

*A Bucks Fever Program of the Central Bucks Chamber of Commerce*

FilmFest was born in 1999 at a planning meeting of the Bucks Fever Advisory Council of the Central Bucks Chamber of Commerce. At that meeting, Chamber member Jon Wilner (formerly of the Delaware Valley Arts Institute), suggested that we add a contemporary art form of growing interest in Bucks County, a Film Festival, to the 25-year-old *Bucks Fever, Celebration of the Arts Program*. FilmFest would encourage and support the growth of a filmmaking community by providing a venue to view the works of area professional and student filmmakers.

Key to the concept was a partnership with the County Theater, the independent movie theater in downtown Doylestown that had sparked a revitalization of Doylestown and built a strong interest in films and filmmaking in the community. The County Theater's founder and Executive Director, John Toner and his Manager, Jim Sanders, agreed to collaborate with the Chamber and FilmFest in providing the screening venue for the films, because of FilmFest's mission to provide a mentoring and learning experience with rising area student filmmakers, along with adult and professional filmmakers.

The first FilmFest was held in September of 2000 and featured a screening of the Academy Award winning "The Buddy Holly Story", introduced and followed by a panel discussion with the producers, director, and musical director, all of whom are Bucks County residents.

In July 2002, the first juried, short film and video FilmFest was opened up to the filmmaking community, receiving 29 submissions from student and independent filmmakers, from which 15 short films/videos were selected and screened at the County Theater to overflow audiences. In each of the ensuing annual FilmFests, the number and the quality of submissions have increased. In addition to having their work screened publicly in a movie theater setting, winning filmmakers are given the opportunity to have their films aired on Comcast On Demand Get Local throughout the Philadelphia area, thereby greatly expanding their viewing audience.

Over the years, FilmFest has added seminars directed primarily at young filmmakers on subjects ranging from film financing, auditions, and script writing. Past seminar presenters include Mike Lemon of Mike Lemon Casting (exclusive casting agent for all M. Night Shyamalan films),

James Breckinridge, script and screenplay writer, Fred Bauer, Producer of “The Buddy Holly Story,” and Mac Outfitters.

Film Fest hosted the first-ever Awards Night at the Mercer Museum in October of 2008. Awards Night is an annual networking opportunity for filmmakers and the central Bucks County business community. Filmmakers, along with their family, friends, and film enthusiasts from all walks of life, attend this event to hear the winners of the upcoming festival announced live.

In 2010, Film Fest celebrated ten years of supporting filmmakers in the community. To date, more than 400 films have been submitted, over 100 screened, and more than \$15,000 in prize money awarded. Additionally, the featured films have received more than 17,500 views on Comcast On Demand.

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