

# **BERKSHIRE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

**VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

Welcome to The Berkshire International Film Festival (BIFF) and thank you for your interest in volunteering. Now, a word from BIFF's Founder and Artistic Director, Kelley Vickery...

Dear BIFF volunteers,

I am thrilled to say that this festival has become one of the top ten cultural events in the Berkshires and the kick off to the summer season. The support and energy of our volunteers has built a great organization for our entire community to enjoy and to be proud of...many people have said they now cannot imagine the Berkshires without the BIFF! It is not easy to build a festival from scratch, but I think it is even harder to sustain it and make it stronger. I appreciate your willingness to volunteer for the BIFF and look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelley R. Vickery".

Kelley Vickery  
Founder and Artistic Director, Berkshire International Film Festival

## **ABOUT US**

The Berkshire International Film Festival (BIFFMA or “BIFF”) is a world-class festival that is an integral part of the cultural fabric of the Berkshires. BIFF showcases not only the best in independent feature, documentary, short, and family films but also offers lively panel discussions and special events focusing on filmmakers and talented artists from both sides of the camera.

The BIFF has become a festival of choice for filmmakers and film lovers alike looking for a unique, Berkshire experience and a place to indulge their passion for film that entertains, educates and inspires. The BIFF connects audiences to compelling documentaries, award-winning international releases and premieres with incredible parties and events. The BIFF brings over 100 films yearly, drawing over 4,000 people during the 4-day festival and continues to bring “See It First” screenings, special events and year round programming to Great Barrington, Pittsfield, Lenox and New York City as a part of the BIFF REEL FRIENDS Film Society.

This annual festival is an opportunity to present these cinematic works of art to our community here in the Berkshires. Your time and effort as a volunteer helps make that possible; regardless of which role you are in, every position is important and necessary.

This booklet will help answer some basic questions and provide some guidance of what is expected during the festival.

## **BIFF MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**Berkshire International Film Festival – 413.528.8030**

40 Railroad Street, Suite #5, Great Barrington, MA 01230

### **Your BIFF executive team:**

Kelley Vickery — Founder and Artistic Director

Laura Palmer — Executive Director

Lauren Ferin — Executive Assistant

Carolyn Lancaster — Filmmaker Summit Producer

## **VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT**

You must commit to a minimum of three shifts (4-6 hrs each) during the festival, as well attend mandatory volunteer orientation sessions prior to the festival. Also, you must be 18 years of age or older to volunteer.

## **FILLING OUT VOLUNTEER APPLICATION**

Download the application from the volunteer page on the Festival website [www.biffma.org](http://www.biffma.org), and complete all the required information. Mail the form to us using the contact information at the bottom of the volunteer application.

## **VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT**

There is a place for all abilities and experience levels on the volunteer team. To find the best fit for you, we will assign you to a festival department(s) based on your preference, experience, skills, and availability as detailed on your application form. We will do our best to assign you to a position that you will be happy with.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Volunteers ensure the best film-going experience possible. All volunteer duties require outstanding people skills. These include the ability to interact with the public in a helpful, kind and courteous manner, and say “NO” with grace and assertiveness. PATIENCE, rational thinking in hectic situations, and a willingness to do whatever needs to be done are necessary. Remember, you are the face of the BIFF.

### **We do expect volunteers to follow certain rules of behavior:**

1. No drinking or drugs permitted during a shift.
2. No self-promotion (e.g. handing out business cards, marketing your movie) on shift but we encourage BIFF promotion— like us on Facebook, tweet, post and share BIFF events from our Official Facebook Page and website!
3. The use of cell phones or email for personal reasons while on shift is not permitted.
4. Volunteers are not permitted to take celebrity photos at events or post them on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram...etc.
5. Volunteers must be on time for each shift; notify your coordinator 24 hours in advance (when possible) if you will be absent or tardy.

## **REQUIREMENTS & BENEFITS**

### **Requirements**

- Commit to a minimum of 16 hours (or 3-4 shifts @ 4-6 hours each)
- Attend mandatory pre-festival volunteer trainings
- Work full shifts – short breaks will be scheduled into your shift
- Distribute Flyers, Posters and Programs pre-festival
- Sign up in advance for specific shifts, as available
- Receive, read and respond to email – our primary mode of communication
- Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age

### **Benefits**

- Admission to Closing Night Film with film voucher
- Invitation to BIFF REEL FRIENDS Society events and screenings
- Private Volunteer screening of a highlighted BIFF film
- Volunteer Wrap Party
- Refreshments during festival
- Your name in print!
- BIFF T-shirt

## **WATCHING FILMS AT THE BIFF**

- Volunteers CANNOT expect to watch films while working their shift. Ushers and In-House Volunteers will be needed to circulate to relieve volunteers for bathroom and snack breaks.
- Volunteers may use their film voucher to attend the Closing Night film or to see any film of your choice (excluding Opening Night, and when not volunteering, of course!) on a space-available basis (that means after pass-holders, ticket-holders and Rush Line patrons have all been seated.)
- If there's a particular film that you absolutely want to be sure to see, the only way to guarantee a seat, is to purchase a ticket prior to the screening.
- Volunteers are required to work at least one of their scheduled shifts before using their film voucher.

## **VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTIONS**

**Drivers/Transportation-** Transport filmmakers, VIPs, guests, and others to and from Great Barrington and Pittsfield; may include runs to all major airports, train stations, and frequent trips to and from the Red Lion Inn.

**Outside Theater Usher-** Fill usher, crowd controller, and ticket taker positions as needed. Monitor lines prior to and during admission. This person must be mindful of the seating priorities accorded to pass holders, ticket holders, and rush line hopefuls. Make sure patrons are in the correct film lines. You will need to announce which line is which— for pass holders, individual ticket holders, and rush line hopefuls – and communicate with Inside Theater Ushers as you “release” each line and seats in the theater are filled.

**Inside Theater Usher-** Protect “reserved” seating for Jury, Filmmakers & VIPs, count available seats for rush ticket sales, and notify Outside Theater Control as to the number of rush tickets available just before the screening is scheduled to begin.

**Special Events-** Work premieres, parties, and events. Catering skills are a plus, helping to set up event space, checking guests at the door, distributing gift bags, checking passes and clean up after the event is necessary.

**Pass Scanner-** Is an Usher that scans all barcodes on passes before patrons enter the theater. Must be patient and remain calm and courteous with anxious passholders

**Ballot Coordinator -** Is an Usher that hands out and collects Audience Award Ballots before and after films. Only 100 ballots will be given out at only one screening per film.

**Merchandise Salesperson -** Inventory setup, display, and sell film Festival merchandise; keeping track of sold inventory, cash box picked up at the beginning of the day and returned to volunteer coordinator or manager at the end of the night. The transportation of inventory from one location to another may be required.

**Phone Dispatch-** Located in BIFF office, he/she mans the telephone answering all patron questions, communicating with Transportation should filmmakers call for rides and/or change travel plans.

**Pass/Ticket Concierge-** distribute complimentary will-call tickets, passes to patrons, and VIP BIFF gift bags as needed. Answer questions regarding the Festival weekend in a courteous, helpful manner.

**Greeter/Filmmaker Check in Assistant-** First point of contact for filmmakers checking in to the BIFF. You will assist in escorting them to the theater where their film is being screened and connect them with the person running the Q&A for that film.

**Box Office**- Process ticket orders on line at the Triplex and Beacon Cinemas leading up to and during BIFF.

### **PRE-FESTIVAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

**Program Distribution**- Work with Paul Johansen to to distribute Festival programs throughout Berkshire County, VT, NY & CT

**Poster/Print Materials Distribution**- Distribution of BIFF promotional materials such as rack cards, posters, etc.

**Gift Bag Assembler**- Assemble Opening Night, VIP and Filmmaker Gift bags

**Filmmaker Transportation**- Provide transportation for filmmakers attending the Filmmaker Summit that arrive on Wednesday

**Office Support**- Run errands, answer phones, distribute programs and BIFF materials and perform any last minute tasks

### **POST-FESTIVAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

Rental Car Return- Assist in returning rental cars back to Pittsfield

Pressbook- Locate, clip and assemble all press articles and place in book

BIFF Office- Pack up and take inventory of merchandise, general cleaning of office

### **THEATER GUIDELINES**

In order for us to create a positive experience for all involved, including patrons, volunteers and theater team members, we ask that you adhere to the following guidelines.

- You are a guest in the theater, please respect their space and their policies. While we are responsible for the festival, they are still responsible for the overall running of their business.
- The theaters donate the space for these special screenings, they make their money from their regular films and any concessions that are sold over the weekend. Please respect their merchandise and concession items. Ask a member of the management team before 'taking' anything that is theater property.

- Customer service is a priority. Whenever possible, if you do not know the answer, please find someone who does. Do not make promises to patrons without knowledge of festival policy that can be referred to in the program.
- Check in with your volunteer coordinator prior to taking a break or leaving your designated area.
- Absolutely no eating in the theater lobby or in the doorways to the theaters. We have designated spots for you to eat.
- If you are assigned to an area near or around a theater entrance, please refrain from conversation with other volunteers or patrons. The sound reverberates into the theater and is disruptive to those trying to enjoy the film.
- Communication is a must, stay in touch with your volunteer coordinator. Check in when you arrive, when you need a break and at the end of your shift.
- If there is a film you would like to see, you will be one of the last people to go in, regardless of your volunteer pass.
- Remember, you are part of a team. As such, you should work together to support each other in your individual roles.

## **FESTIVAL GUIDELINES**

### **Admission**

Passholders MUST be present at the venue, in their appropriate lines **15 minutes prior** to the scheduled film start time. Late seating is only permitted if seats are still available.

### **Festival Etiquette**

- No outside food is permitted in the festival theaters. The theaters go above and beyond to provide quality foods to patrons.
- All theaters must be cleared between showtimes and to allow staff to clean and ready the theater for the next screening. Any left behind will either be put in the trash or put in lost and found.
- Saving seats for other guests or for yourself between shows is not permitted.
- To expedite theater cleaning and seating please discard your trash and exit promptly after your screening.
- Please keep talking to a minimum when exiting theaters to not disturb the other patrons in other theaters.
- No recording equipment is permitted in the theater.
- Please turn off all cell phones and pagers during the film presentation.

- For the pleasure of all patrons, there is no talking permitted during the film presentation and no late seating if the theater is at full capacity.
- Lines may lead outside of the theater and theater temperatures are regulated automatically, depending on the number of patrons in the theater. Please bring layers and dress appropriately for your comfort.

## **PASS & TICKETS SALES**

All Passes on sale now at [www.biffma.org\\*](http://www.biffma.org) Can be picked up in May in BIFF office

### **Passes**

\$99 Under 25 All-Access Movie Pass- allows passholder admission to all movies and panel discussions throughout the Festival in Great Barrington and Pittsfield. Must be under 25 years old

\$225 All-Access Movie Pass- allows pass holder admission to all movies and panel discussions throughout the Festival in Great Barrington and Pittsfield

\$400 Tribute/Special Event Pass- allows pass holder access to the Tribute Night cocktail party, reserved seating for Tribute Night Film, and admission to all Festival movies (including Opening Night film) and panel discussions throughout the weekend.

\$400 Opening Night Pass- allows pass holder access to Opening Night Cocktail Party, reserved seating for Opening Night film, and admission to all movies (including Tribute Night Event) and panel discussions throughout the Festival weekend.

\$600 All-Inclusive BIFF- Pass allows pass holder access to the Opening Night cocktail party and screening, the Tribute Night reception and screening, Filmmaker Cocktail Party, Juried Prize Brunch Closing Night event and admission to all movies and panel discussions throughout the weekend.

**Other Passes Include:** Filmmaker, Press, Sponsor and Volunteer (obviously) \* Passes sold on a first-come first-served basis.

**Individual Tickets-** (\$10-25) Online ([www.biffma.org](http://www.biffma.org))

\*Tickets for all films may be purchased in advance at the Triplex and Beacon \*Mahaiwe will only sell tickets for films & events taking place at the Mahaiwe can be purchased through their box office also.

### **Rush Line Sales**

Seats that are set aside for Passholders will be released 5 minutes prior to the scheduled start time. All tickets will be sold on a first come first serve basis. CASH ONLY SALES NO REFUND OR EXCHANGES.

Please read carefully the following information about volunteering for BIFF - even if you've volunteered for the BIFF before, as several things have changed this year. Every department needs help in a wide variety of areas.