



Department of Neighborhoods
Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

Key Collaborating
Partner

Host City Organizer:
jfs Alexander Institute for Inclusion

Lead Sponsors:



ReelAbilities: Houston Film & Arts Festival 2017 FACT SHEET

FESTIVAL OVERVIEW

- ReelAbilities: Houston Film and Arts Festival is a **free, city-wide festival** that promotes inclusion and celebrates the lives, stories, and talents of people living with disabilities. The festival is in its **fifth year** in Houston.
- ReelAbilities is the largest festival in the country of its kind - *using the arts as a vehicle to both educate and change perceptions about individuals with disabilities*. Launched nationally in New York City in 2007, Houston was the sixth of fourteen cities to host its unique version of ReelAbilities, adding visual art and musical components, programming in schools and corporations, and UP Abilities, an evening of extraordinary speakers. ReelAbilities Houston is considered among the most innovative in the nation and is, after NYC, the largest and most innovative in the nation.
- JFS Alexander Institute for Inclusion, founded by Joan & Stanford Alexander and a division of JFS Disability Services, is Houston's festival host organizer, in collaboration with the City's Department of Neighborhoods Houston's Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.
- TIRR Memorial Hermann, our founding partner, and Bristow Group are returning again as lead sponsors. The Houston Ballet is a new partner this year and will be facilitating a Theatre District Screening downtown on February 14.
- Mayor Sylvester Turner joins the Honorary Committee of ReelAbilities: Houston 2017.
- Vikki Evans is the Chair of ReelAbilities: Houston 2017. Since 2014, Vikki has proudly served on the board of Jewish Family Services, where she co-chaired Reel Hope, the annual Gala in 2016. She has served on the Film Selection committee for ReelAbilities since its inception. Evans is a Realtor with Martha Turner Sotheby's International Realty.
- ReelAbilities: Houston strives to make this festival accessible to people with disabilities to be able to enjoy the film, art and music experiences, as well as sharing this experience with other arts organizations so that more cultural events have accommodations available for all attendees to participate and enjoy.
- To make this a "no-barriers" experience, all ReelAbilities: Houston Film and Arts Festival **events are free and open to the public**; space is limited. For more information and to reserve tickets, visit **ReelAbilitiesHouston.org**.

2017 PROGRAMMING

- **Theatre District Screening with The Houston Ballet:** Houstonians are invited to a special **one-hour screening** of the ReelAbilities short films on **February 14**, Valentine's Day, at The Houston Ballet located downtown. The screening will begin at 6:00pm and is free to the public. Guests are invited to join us for a showing of the short films *Perfect* (12 minutes), *I Don't Care* (14 minutes), *Birthday* (16 minutes), and *Bumblebees* (4 minutes). Each attendee will walk away with a special giveaway from ReelAbilities thanking them for their presence. Street parking is free after 6:00pm.



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- **ReelPeople: UPAbilities:** This event, a partnership with The UP Experience, is the kickoff event and opens the festival on **February 16** at the **Rice University Shepherd School of Music** with presentations from extraordinary thought leaders on mental and physical disabilities and topics of inclusion.
- This event is **free to the public, registration required**. After the speakers' presentations, attendees can attend smaller Q&A sessions with the speaker of their choice. The event is in partnership with the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities and the nonPareil Institute. The reception is sponsored by IberiaBank.
- This year's speakers include:
 - **Henry Evans**
Henry Evans at age 40 became quadriplegic and mute after a stroke-like attack caused by a hidden birth defect. He is a frequent and enthusiastic collaborator with robotics teams such as Robots for Humanity who are developing tools to help the severely disabled navigate their lives and the world. Years of therapy helped him learn to move his head and to use his finger allowing him to use a head-tracking device to communicate with a computer using experimental interfaces. He currently collaborates with Georgia Tech on using the Willow Garage PR2 robot as a surrogate, as well as RLAB at Brown on quadrotors for expanding range of motion.
 - **Jane McGonigal**
Jane McGonigal is a world-renowned game designer, and an expert on the engagement economy and the application of game-design to the real world. She serves as the Director of Game Research & Development with the Institute for The Future in Palo Alto, California. Jane's book, *SuperBetter: A Revolutionary Approach to Getting Stronger, Happier, Braver and More Resilient* debuted at #7 on the New York Times Advice bestsellers list, reveals a decade's worth of scientific research into the ways all games change how we respond to stress, challenge, and pain. She shares stories and data from players who have followed the SuperBetter rules to get stronger, happier, and braver in the face of depression, anxiety, illness, and injury.
 - **Elise Roy**
Elise Roy is a deaf lawyer, artist, artisan, and human rights advocate who works in the vanguard of the social design movement, which holds that designers have the capacity and responsibility to address and resolve human problems on micro and macro scales and thereby contribute to social well-being. Deaf from the age of ten, Elise has been a design thinker from early on, constantly adapting her environment and its tools to serve her extraordinary abilities. At Brown University, Elise was recognized as one of the nation's elite soccer goalkeepers and she began to see herself as an advocate for people with non-normative abilities. When Elise was in law school, she began working on the International Disability Rights Treaty at the United Nations, the first such human rights treaty to be passed in the 21st century, and she traveled the world to see it put into action.
- **Films:** The 2017 festival will screen 15 films beginning **February 19** through **February 23** at **Edwards Greenway Grand Palace Stadium 24**. Each of the films feature an interactive event to foster dialogue between the audience, the filmmaker, parents, professionals, or persons with disabilities, and to explore the particular subjects depicted in the film.

- **February 19:**
 - **Enter the Faun - (Evening film begins at 7:00 PM)** Opening night in partnership with **The Houston Ballet**
 The unlikely collaboration between a veteran choreographer and a young actor with cerebral palsy delivers astonishing proof that each and every body is capable of miraculous transformation. As Tamar Rogoff trains Gregg Mozgala to dance in her performance, they discover that her lack of formal medical training and his fears and physical limitations are the impetus for her choreography and their unprecedented discoveries. Enter The Faun is the story of a joyous, obsessed journey toward opening night. It challenges the boundaries of medicine and art, as well as the limitations associated with disability.
Director: Tamar Rogoff and Daisy Wright, Documentary, 67 min, USA, English
- **February 20:**
 - **Hear This! - (Short matinee film begins at 1:00 PM)**
 When 10-year-old Tristan wants his dad to become the trainer of his soccer team, the club won't allow it because his father is deaf. Tristan decides to prove them wrong.
Director: Soulaima El Khaldi, Documentary, 15 min.
 - **Strings (Cuerdas) - (Short matinee film begins at 1:00 PM)**
 María's routine at school is altered by the arrival of a child who soon becomes her best friend.
Director: Pedro Solis Garcia, Animated/Narrative, 11 min, Spain, Spanish, Family Friendly
 - **Little Hero - (Short matinee film begins at 1:00 PM)**
 A 6-year-old boy with autism is seen through his twin sister's eyes.
Director: Marcus A. McDougald & Jennifer Medvin, Documentary, 10 min, USA, English, Family Friendly
 - **Chimes for Tyler - (Short matinee film begins at 1:00 PM)**
 A boy with autism can distinguish wind chimes by sound.
Director: Stephen Panaggio, Documentary, 8min, USA, English, Family Friendly
 - **Patrick's Day - (Evening film begins at 7:00 PM) Mental Health Night** in partnership with the **Houston Police Department and Houston Fire Department (Collaboration in Formation)**
 Patrick is a warm young man living with schizophrenia. Medication and his mother's fierce protection means he is no threat to himself or anyone else—until St. Patrick's Day, when he meets Karen, a suicidal flight attendant. This raw and audacious love story provocatively explores issues ranging from the right to intimacy to the question of when parental love becomes a destructive force.
Director: Terry McMahon, Narrative, 98 min, Ireland, English, Adult Content
- **February 21:**
 - **Margarita with a Straw - (Matinee film begins at 4:00 PM)**
 A funky, stereotype-busting coming-of-age tale based on the true story of a Punjabi teenage girl with cerebral palsy. Laila, an aspiring writer and secret rebel in a wheelchair, is accepted to New York University and leaves India for Manhattan. After a chance encounter with a fiery female activist, Laila starts to grow emotionally and explore this new world and its liberal sexualities. Tackling subject matter rarely explored with lightheartedness, this TIFF award-winning drama is a beautiful, bold, and brave portrait of love, identity, and sexuality. Margarita, with a Straw is joyous cinema bound to win your heart.

Director: Shonali Bose & Nilesh Maniyar, Narrative, 97 min, India, English and Hindi, Adult Content

▪ **Stilts & Spoke - (Evening film begins at 7:00 PM)**

A heartfelt, entertaining, and comedic documentary. After Jay Cramer falls off a boulder and breaks his neck, he rebounds from injury—which has left him quadriplegic—to win the Los Angeles Funniest Comic competition. While in rehab, he meets a world class double above-the-knee amputee sprinter, Katy Sullivan, and falls head over heels for her. They fall in love and go on to inspire millions.

Director: Jack Winch, Documentary, 91 min, USA, English

- A free session of **Laughter Yoga with Lainie** will follow the films from 8:30 - 9:00pm

○ **February 22:**

▪ **Gabe - (Matinee film begins at 4:00 PM)**

Gabe Weil is a 27-year-old who was born with the most severe form of muscular dystrophy. For his entire life, Gabe had been told he would be lucky to live past 25. But recently, he learned he was misdiagnosed, and might live well into his 50s. Although this news was overwhelmingly positive, it presented a surprising obstacle: Gabe did not have any long-term goals. He was forced to rethink his life from scratch. This radical shift in consciousness propelled him to set new goals, continue facing reality, and manifest more dreams.

Director: Luke Terrell, Documentary, 72 min, USA, USA, English

▪ **Do You Dream in Color? - (Evening film begins at 7:00 PM)** Partnership with **Novum Energy Services**

The poignant coming-of-age story of Connor, Nick, Sarah, and Carina, who navigate the growing pains of high school, but, unlike most teens, face another challenge—they are blind. Do You Dream in Color? captures their journeys as they strive to achieve their goals: to be a sponsored skateboarder, to travel the world, to become a rock star, and to be the first in one's family to graduate high school. Through their personal stories we learn of the experience of being blind and how these fearless teenagers navigate through it.

Director: Abigail Fuller & Sarah Ivy, Documentary, 76 min, USA, English, Family Friendly

○ **February 23:**

▪ **The Case of the Three Sided Dream - (Matinee film begins at 4:00 PM)**

Multi-instrumentalist jazz legend Rahsaan Roland Kirk was known for playing multiple instruments at once and for his comical and political interjections on stage, creating music about his experience becoming blind as an infant. A child prodigy, adult visionary, and political activist, Kirk played even after becoming paralyzed, and up until the day he died.

Director: Adam Kahan, Documentary, 88 min, USA, English, 2014

- **ReelMusic: An All-Inclusive Jazz and Blues Jam:** Professional jazz and blues musicians invite musicians with disabilities to jam with the band at the Secret Group on **February 23, from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.** (doors at 5:00pm).

- **ReelArt: The Art of Celebration:** This event will celebrate the grand opening of the Center for Art and Photography at Celebration Company, a public showroom and gallery to sell the artwork, photography and products of artists with disabilities. The exhibition will take place from January 30 - March 31 at **JFS Houston's new Center for Art and Photography at Celebration Company** and will feature visual art and photography from Celebration Company participants in partnership with Grant's EcoArt. A preview of the ReelArt exhibit and meet and greet with Grant and other Celebration Company artists will take place on January 30 from 6:00-8:00pm.
 - Houston will become one of the few cities in the nation, besides NYC, Boston and San Diego, that will feature, for both tourists and local citizens, a gallery displaying the work of artists with disabilities. Moving forward, Celebration Company will focus on the intersection of these artists and the general public, through weekly photoshoots, corporate hiring of the photographers for projects, sales of art for hotel chains, corporate offices, and real estate development companies.
 - Celebration Company is an entrepreneurial program for adults living with disabilities. The program is composed of 20 adults with disabilities who create art as an expressive outlet for both a leisure activity and a life skill.
 - Grant's EcoArt is a Houston-based business founded by Grant Manier, a young and talented artist living with high-functioning autism. "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle" is the foundation for Grant's art.
 - Grant creates works of art using magazines, calendars, wallpaper, posters, puzzles and more. Each art piece contains thousands of cut or torn pieces of recycled materials.
- **ReelEducation:** In addition to our city-wide public events, the festival also brings free programming during the school day to Houston area schools so that the message of inclusion and the importance of arts is being communicated to our city's youth – through film, music, and fine art. Last year, over 7000 elementary, middle and high school students participated.
- **ReelWorkplace:** ReelWorkplace seminars featuring films, speakers, and etiquette workshops about various topics of inclusion are attended by local companies to benefit their hiring managers, staff, and future employees.
- **ReelTravelers:** For the third year, ReelAbilities: Houston will show film shorts in the Houston airport system as a part of Houston Airport System's Public Art Program so thousands of people passing through the airport can experience the festival and know how Houston's cultural arts scene includes subjects on diversity through the showing of world class films.



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2016 FESTIVAL OUTCOMES:

ReelAbilities 2016 was the biggest festival since it was launched locally in 2013:

- The festival drew more than 10,000 people to events across Houston (a 100% increase over 2015)
- Over 7,000 students attended ReelEducation screenings at 31 schools (a threefold increase over 2015)
- 115,536 travelers passed by ReelShorts screened at Houston George Bush Intercontinental Airport, Terminal A
- In efforts to present a truly barrier-free experience for all, all festival events were FREE admission for the first time
- ReelPeople: UP Abilities in partnership with *The UP Experience* brought three extraordinary speakers from around the world to share their stories
- The festival featured its first-ever all-inclusive ReelMusic event
- ReelAbilities was supported by more than: 50 sponsors, 65 collaborating partners, and 100 dedicated volunteers
- ReelAbilities secured wide media coverage, with over 74 million impressions in the Houston area
- ReelAbilities Houston found a new "Home of the Festival" at Edwards Grand Palace Studio 24, a premiere movie theatre centrally located in Houston's prime Greenway area
- City Hall was lit up orange during the week of the festival in honor the Key Collaborative Partnership between ReelAbilities Houston and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities

How your company can participate:

- Sponsor
- Attend
- Volunteer
- Host Screening/Speaker at Your Office
- Host Disability Etiquette Seminar at Your Office

For information, please contact Rachel Davis rdavis@jfshouston.org 713 667 9336 x 213
Or go to www.reelabilitieshouston.org