

HELLO
my name is



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT RUTH COWING, CO-DIRECTOR;
DANNA PERRY, OSCAR WINNER; MEMBERS OF
CANANDAIGUA VETERAN'S CRISIS HOTLINE TEAM

Q&A WITH A WXXI UNDERWRITER

Each May and June, **Reel Mind Theatre & Film Series** features films, performances and art exhibits that address the social stigma of mental illness and behavioral disorders. Ruth Cowing and Dr. Larry Guttmacher, co-directors, discuss the series and the enduring impact it has on the community.

Q. How did the series come to fruition?

The two of us, with Herb Katz, were supporters of the National Alliance on Mental Illness-Rochester, whose mission is to decrease stigma. We thought film had a wonderful potential to educate about recovery, so we decided to try out a “small little series.” We were shocked when our first screening sold out, with a line around the block! The desire for these community conversations was very clear.

Q. What can the community expect from this year's 10th anniversary series?

Our kick-off on May 8th at the Memorial Art Gallery will feature a juried exhibit by Creative Wellness and a screening of the 2018 Oscar winner *Heaven is a Traffic Jam* on the 405, about brilliant artist Mindy Alper. In subsequent weeks, we'll host a stage reading at the JCC, as well as a number of great documentaries at the Cinema Theater including *Deej*, about a young poet/advocate with Autism; *God Knows Where I Am*, shot by former Rochesterian Geraldo Puglio; and *Alive Inside*, about the effect of music on dementia, partially shot at St. John's. Prior to the screening of *Alive Inside*, UR psychiatry chair Ben Lee presents a special musical performance.

Q. What do you look forward to each year when producing the series?

The Q&As, with consumers of mental health services, professionals and film makers/subjects. The discussions are always very moving, and there's a palpable sense of community building.

Q. Inspirational story that comes to mind over the past 10 years?

One of our favorite films was *OC87: The Obsessive Compulsive, Major Depression, Bipolar, Asperger's Movie!* As the Q&A began, a shy, perhaps 16 year-old boy stood up and said to the filmmaker, “You told my story.” Many of us were moved to tears.

Q. What organizations do you collaborate with for this effort?

This is very much a collaborative effort with local mental health providers: NAMI-Rochester, Mental Health Association, UR Department of Psychiatry, East House, DePaul, Rochester Psychiatric Center, and many others.

For more information and tickets, visit reelmindfilmfest.org



The Reel Mind Film Series

To learn more about underwriting on WXXI, email underwriting@wxxi.org