

JFK Student Creates “Fire Island Film Festival” to Highlight Independent Filmmakers and Actors

Jesse Ray Sheps Organizes Film Festival to Give Back to the Community

Plainview-Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School (POBJFKHS) junior Jesse Ray Sheps has created and organized his own film festival, the Fire Island Film Festival. Jesse came up with the idea for the event during the pandemic and envisioned it would serve dual purposes, highlighting a variety of independent films and filmmakers, while simultaneously raising money for St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital.

“I wanted to create a platform for young filmmakers of all diverse backgrounds to come together to share their passion for film while giving back to the community at large,” said Jesse. “I’m so glad I was able to create opportunities for filmmakers and actors to come together to share their story and recognize their accomplishments.”

The festival, scheduled for August 28th on Fire Island, received several hundred submissions from filmmakers around the globe including an Oscar nominated film and several that were shown at the Sundance and TriBeCa Film Festivals. Not only did Jesse narrow it down to the top six final submissions, he has also arranged for the respective directors and actors from each film to attend the festival.

Jesse always possessed a love for film; he has served as an advisory member of a local indie film house, started the film club at POBJFKHS, and has won awards for his own films, those he has acted in and one that he wrote and starred in. Jesse is still regularly acting and writing, constantly honing his craft, all while maintaining his position as an honor student and the editor-in-chief of The Hawk Eye, the POBJFKHS newspaper.

Jesse is currently finalizing corporate sponsorships with banks, beverage manufacturers, and other local businesses. In addition, he is selling film festival t-shirts and tickets to raise even more money from this event, with all of the proceeds benefiting St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital. To learn more about The Fire Island Film Festival, please visit www.fifilmfest.com.

