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Filmmaker brings 'Stories from the Field' into Montclair's backyard

Wednesday, May 18, 2005

By ALICIA ZADROZNY

Before heading out to see "The Interpreter" this weekend, consider getting closer to the work of the United Nations and take in "Stories from the Field," the first UN documentary film festival.

The film festival originated with Corinna Sager, a Montclair filmmaker and president of Media Communications Association-International, New York Chapter (MCA-I NY).

During a MCA-I NY meeting at the United Nations last year, Sager and other association members got to talking about bringing the worldwide work of UN staff and agencies to a wider audience. Along with UN Department of Public Information, MCA-I NY will realize this goal at the New School University Tischman Auditorium on Saturday and Sunday, May 21 and 22.

Forty-four films created by the United Nations and 18 of its agencies will be shown at the festival, which will also panel discussions with filmmakers and an award presentation by MCA-NY members.

For some, the UN agencies can be a virtual alphabet soup of WHO (World Health Organization) or UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). Sager said the best result that can come from the film festival is for viewers to learn about the varied work of the United Nations and its partner agencies.

"When we hear UN, we think of the Security Council and we think of the situation in Iraq. They have so many agencies working on humanitarian projects," Sager said. "You watch these films and you think, 'There is so much out there that people have to deal with.'"

Eighty films were submitted to the MCA-I NY for consideration by four panels. While the quality of documentaries ranged from considerable to shoestring budgets, Sager said, it was the compelling stories that won out.

"We had to be fair. Sometimes there is a person operating a mini-DV camera shooting landmines in Cambodia," Sager said. "It's the story."

The films highlight the UN's Millennium Development Goals that were adopted in 2000 and target goals such as eradicating extreme poverty, ensuring universal primary education, promoting gender equality and improving maternal health and infant mortality, combating HIV/AIDS and malaria, sustaining the environment and achieving international development through global

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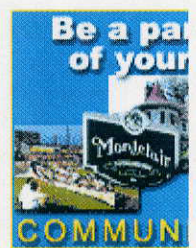
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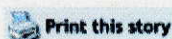
In many cases, said Isabelle Broyer, a spokeswoman for the United Nations, material from the films is shown in the form of Public Service Announcements to other parts of the world such as Asia and Europe. By bringing them to New York, Broyer said, viewers have an opportunity to learn about some issues they might not have thought of before.

For instance, the documentaries deal with such topics as the effect of global warming on tourism as waters have risen at distant islands. Also, she said, many of the films highlight the plight of children and the United Nation's attempt to educate them.

"The UN is not just about having meetings with high officials. In the end, it goes all the way to the field, to the village," Broyer said.

For information about the "Stories from the Field" Film Festival, visit www.mcainy.org/unfilm

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