

Screening to raise interest in new Jewish film festival

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Two Wilmington cultural entrepreneurs will take the first step toward achieving their dream when a special film screens Oct. 13 at Thalian Hall.

The documentary “Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy,” written, produced and directed by Michael Kantor, will be a sample of sorts – a way to give local film lovers a preview of a much larger four-film festival set to take place next year in Wilmington.

The inaugural Wilmington Jewish Film Festival is scheduled for April 3-6, 2014. This weekend’s screening, which Kantor is slated to attend to answer questions from the audience, is being billed as a preview.

The idea for a local film festival started when Beverly Schoninger, who is co-chairing the event with Peggy Rosoff, moved to Wilmington from Denver, which had already established its own Jewish film festival. After attending other such events around the country as well as the Jewish Film Presenters Conference in New York City, both Schoninger and Rosoff decided it was time to bring a celebration of Jewish film to Wilmington.

“Bringing a festival to Wilmington would help the downtown community in several ways, one of which being that it would help with the continual creation of a strong connection between Wilmington’s Jewish community and the people of Wilmington,” Rosoff said. “We hope to use [Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy] as a kickoff to attract sponsorship for our larger April festival.”

Rosoff and Schoninger said creating the festival in Wilmington would help stimulate the local economy.

Currently, more than 150 cities in the U.S. play home to Jewish Film Festivals, bringing in close to \$5 million in annual revenue.

“We think it will do great things for downtown Wilmington,” Schoninger said. “Whether it’s bringing people to local restaurants and shops or having a larger turnout at other downtown events.”

A few local companies are already on board to help fund the startup. The project has received donations from the Cucalorus Film Festival, WHQR and the B’nai Israel Congregation, among others.

“Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy” will be shown at 3 p.m. For information, go to **www.thalianhall.org** (<http://www.thalianhall.org>).

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