

= Reel Affirmations =

Reel Affirmations (RA) is a non @-@ profit , all @-@ volunteer LGBT film festival in Washington , D.C. Founded in 1991 and held every year in mid @-@ October , as of 2011 Reel Affirmations was one of the largest LGBT film festivals (in terms of attendance) in the United States . Baltimore 's Gay Life newspaper called it " one of the top three films festivals for the entire LGBT community . " A 2007 guidebook claims it was one of the largest LGBT film festivals in the world . A listing of LGBT film festivals claims it is the largest all @-@ volunteer film festival in the world .

= = Organization = =

Reel Affirmations is a program of One In Ten , a Washington , D.C.-based LGBT non @-@ profit arts organization . One In Ten is overseen by a board of four officers and nine board members . Until 2009 , a full @-@ time , paid executive director oversaw the day @-@ to @-@ day operations of the organization . But as of 2011 , its operations were run by the board and three volunteer directors . All One In Ten programs , including Reel Affirmations , are conceived , organized , and implemented by volunteers .

Planning for Reel Affirmations begins after the conclusion of each year 's festival . Deposits are placed to secure venues , and corporate sponsors are secured (an ongoing process which lasts until August) . Programming teams for feature films , women 's shorts , men 's shorts , and documentaries begin researching and screening films in February . Films are secured by contract beginning as early as May , although most contracts are not finalized until early July . A coordinating committee oversees implementation of VIP relations , hospitality , volunteer coordination , marketing , embassy relations , public relations , and other aspects of the film festival .

Most funding for Reel Affirmations comes from corporate sponsorships and ticket sales . Additional support comes from grants provided by the D.C. city government .

Reel Affirmations previously sponsored a two @-@ day film festival which coincided with Capital Pride . The program began sponsoring monthly film screenings titled RA Xtra beginning in 2000 , but stopped these events after RA15 in 2005 . RA Xtra resumed in November 2010 . The organization also formerly sponsored " Divas Outdoors " , a two @-@ movie outdoor screening of classic gay @-@ related movies at Hillwood Estate , Museum & Gardens , the former home of Marjorie Merriweather Post (heiress to the Post cereal fortune) .

= = History = =

= = = Early years = = =

Reel Affirmations was co @-@ founded by Barry Becker , Mark Betchkal , Matthew Cibellis and Keith Clark , gay residents of Washington , D.C. , who wished to found a gay arts organization . They began meeting in 1990 , and founded the LGBT arts organization One In Ten , with Reel Affirmations as the organization 's first program . The four sought the advice and input of Frameline , then the largest LGBT gay film festival in the U.S. With financial and administrative assistance from Frameline , the first Reel Affirmations film festival opened on October 11 , 1991 . The first festival venue was the Biograph Theater in Georgetown . The 10 @-@ day festival screened 62 feature films , short subjects and documentaries to 2 @, @ 500 attendees . The opening night film was *My Father Is Coming* , and the closing night film was *Together Alone* .

In 1992 , the festival expanded to screen its opening night film at the Cineplex Odeon Embassy Theatre in the District . Author Armistead Maupin opened the festival . RA2 screened 76 short and feature @-@ length works shown at the Biograph .

The following year , the festival screened 24 features and 44 shorts and added screenings at the Goethe @-@ Institut and Charles Sumner School . With the film festival on firm financial footing , Frameline did not provide administrative and financial support for RA3 .

The festival continued to expand in 1994 , screening 130 films and dropping smaller venues (Biograph , Sumner School) while adding larger ones (such as the West End 1 @-@ 4 cinema) . The festival also conducted a screening at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden ? one of the first gay events to be held in a federal building . 1994 was also the year the festival scored its first U.S premiere .

By its fifth anniversary in 1995 , Reel Affirmations was the fourth @-@ largest LGBT film festival in the United States in attendance , with more than 12 @,@ 000 attendees . Although the festival screened only 102 films that year , it expanded to a fifth large venue (the AMC Courthouse Theatre in Virginia) . A year later , it dropped two of its smaller venues in favor of the 275 @-@ seat Goldman Theatre in the D.C. Jewish Community Center in Dupont Circle .

= = = Lincoln Theatre years = = =

Reel Affirmations ' growth led it to move out of the Cineplex Odeon Embassy and West End theaters in 1998 . The film fest moved into the 1 @,@ 200 @-@ seat historic Lincoln Theatre located near U and 14th Streets , N.W. RA8 screened more than 140 feature films , shorts and documentaries at the two venues .

1999 was a turning point for Reel Affirmations . Several years of declining attendance by women led festival director Sarah Kellogg to create a special women 's program . The event , known as the Women Filmmakers Brunch , has continued ever since and features women filmmakers , screenings , and a discussion of films with particular appeal to women . RA9 also was the only LGBT film festival of the season to screen Boys Don 't Cry . The award @-@ winning film debuted in New York City , screened at Reel Affirmations , and then opened in theaters nationwide .

In honor of the festival 's continuing success , the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance bestowed its 2004 Distinguished Service Award on Reel Affirmations festival director Sarah Kellogg . In 2006 , RA 16 screened more than 100 movies to more than 30 @,@ 000 attendees during its 10 @-@ day run .

= = = Post @-@ 2008 festival = = =

In 2008 , in addition to the Lincoln Theatre , the film festival used several locations including the Goethe @-@ Institut , Sixth & I Synagogue , and Landmark E Street Cinema (all in Washington , D.C.) , as well as the AFI Silver theater in Silver Spring , Maryland .

In 2009 , Reel Affirmations struck a relationship with the Shakespeare Theatre Company . The film festival did not use the Lincoln Theatre , holding its larger film screenings at the company 's Sidney Harman Hall . Festival executive director Margaret Murray left in November 2009 after four years as RA head ? leaving the festival with about \$ 40 @,@ 000 in debt . According to the Washington Blade , an LGBTQ newspaper in D.C. , a number of factors were responsible for the debt : A diminishing number of corporate sponsors , the timing of Murray 's resignation (just as donor recruitment was beginning for the following year) , lack of preparation by RA for Murray 's departure , an increasing number of popular LGBTQ events competing with the festival in October , fewer advertisers in the festival 's program booklet , poor weather during several days of the 2009 festival , discontinuation of the festival 's VIP program (which left it dependent on single ticket sales) , and a heavy drop in single ticket sales . Many board members left the organization , new board members were recruited , and three volunteers took over RA 's day @-@ to @-@ day operations .

In July 2010 , RA organizers announced that the film festival would move from October 2010 to April 2011 because of funding shortfalls . One news source reported that RA organizers had intended to hold an October film festival , but a community fundraiser brought in only \$ 5 @,@ 000 ? far less than hoped , and not enough to allow an October festival to occur . The move to April was prompted , in part , by the hope that a \$ 75 @,@ 000 D.C. government grant would allow the festival to occur . However , on March 8 , 2011 , RA officials cancelled the April event because of continuing heavy debt and because several grants had not been awarded to the organization . Festival organizers scheduled the 20th Reel Affirmations LGBTQ film festival for October 13 ? 22 , 2011 .

Additional changes occurred during the 20th film festival . The film festival no longer held events at the Shakespeare Theatre Company . The primary film festival venue was Lisner Auditorium at George Washington University (GWU) . Other venues included GWU 's Documentary Center , GWU 's Marvin Center Amphitheatre , Atlas Performing Arts Center , the FHI 360 Globe Theater , and the West End Cinema (one of the original venues for the film festival in the early 1990s) . The festival also instituted an " Embassy Screening Series , " in which LGBTQ films from a specific country were screened at that nation 's embassy in Washington , D.C. Screenings occurred at the Embassy of Israel and Embassy of France , and by the Embassy of Germany at the Goethe @-@ Institut . The Women and Filmmakers ' Brunch continued to be held , although the venue was now the U.S. Navy Memorial Heritage Center 's Arleigh Burke Theater . Festival volunteer coordinator Mark Heckathorn estimated that the festival would draw 20 @,@ 000 attendees in 2011 .

Reel Affirmations continued to recover from its financial crisis in 2012 . In March 2012 , it held an " Oscar Party " (with muscular men covered in gold welcoming patrons) in which the public was invited to view the Academy Awards in a gay @-@ friendly setting . Reel Affirmations hosted a truncated four @-@ day festival (November 1 ? 4) in 2012 . Once more , its venues changed . The festival returned to its long @-@ time venue at the D.C. Jewish Community Center and the Goethe Institut as well as its RA Xtra venue at the Carnegie Institution for Science .

= = = End of annual festival = = =

Reel Affirmations ceased to offer an annual film festival at the conclusion of the 2012 event . One In Ten turned the Reel Affirmations program over to The DC Center , a nonprofit organization offering several different programs to the local LGBTQ community . The DC Center reestablished the RA Xtra program of monthly film screenings , which it offered beginning in 2015 .

Reel Affirmations planned a three @-@ day film festival for August 28 @-@ 30 , 2015 , at the Gala Hispanic / Tivoli Theatre .

= = Awards = =

Reel Affirmations presents four major awards each year . Each award is bestowed based on audience balloting . Honors are given for Best Feature , Best Documentary , Best Male Short , and Best Female Short . Beginning in 2011 , Reel Affirmations added two new awards . These included a First Time Director and a Best International Movie award .

Reel Affirmations formerly distributed a Plant @-@ A @-@ Seed filmmaker grant at the end of each festival . The grant was established in 2000 . It was supported by audience donations and a silent auction held throughout each year 's festival , and varied in amount from year to year . The grant was awarded by the One In Ten board to a filmmaker or filmmakers who had previously produced a feature film , short or documentary , and was intended to help the filmmaker complete a current work in progress . This grant was discontinued in 2008 . The festival re @-@ established its filmmaker 's grant award in 2011 , renaming it the Keith Clark & Barry Becker Filmmaker Award (in honor of the co @-@ founders of the festival) .