



## **PRESS RELEASE: “Reaching for the Stars... The West Virginia STEM and the Arts Film Festival” Inaugural Event on Marshall University’s campus February 28<sup>th</sup> through March 2<sup>nd</sup>**

- **Event is Free and Open to the Public**
- **Films, Performances, Workshops, and Activities focusing on STEM and the Arts**

HUNTINGTON, WV, Feb. 1, 2019 – West Virginia Alliance for STEM and the Arts (WV AllSTAR) in partnership with Marshall University and the Green Bank Observatory are co-hosting the inaugural “Reaching for the Stars...The West Virginia STEM and the Arts Film Festival” at the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse and on Marshall University’s campus beginning Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup> through Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>. All events are free and open to the public, tickets can be obtained from the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse Box Office starting February 25<sup>th</sup>.

The Film Festival is a multimedia experience featuring five films by award-winning filmmakers from Brooklyn, New York to Huntington, West Virginia, as well as the winners of the West Virginia Student Film Competition. In addition to these films, there will be a series of filmmaker workshops led by many award-winning filmmakers, a “Discover Astronomy and Engineering in WV with the Green Bank Observatory” workshop led by Green Bank Observatory staff, and a West Virginia Women in STEM panel discussion. Performances by Marshall University Dance Theater, The Elk River Ramblers, and The Academy of Arts at January’s will be enjoyed throughout the Festival alongside many local organizations exhibiting excellence in STEM and the Arts to provide educational information and activities to local students on Friday morning and the general public on Saturday afternoon. The WV STEM and the Arts Film Festival has something for everyone!

The first of its kind – “Reaching for the Stars...The West Virginia STEM and the Arts Film Festival” – combines two seemingly different areas – STEM, also known as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, and the Arts, which encompasses all forms – performance, film, classic art, etc., in unique ways to show that both are enhanced by the other. The five films themselves are examples of both an art and a science. Four of the five films are about West Virginia in some way and portray the very best of our state. The fifth film, “Brooklyn Castle”, is an inspiring, award-winning film about a 70%-below-the-poverty-line middle school in Brooklyn, New York that is one of the most winning Chess Champion schools in the US. “Brooklyn Castle”’s filmmaker, Katie Dellamaggiore, is currently filming a documentary, “The Quiet Zone”, about the Green Bank Observatory and the surrounding Quiet Zone and the impact it has on peoples’ lives. She has been awarded a grant from the Sundance Institute and the Simons Foundation for “The Quiet Zone” and recently filmed with local students and MU President Jerome Gilbert during her filmmaking.

Another unique factor about the Festival is that 4 of the 5 films are made by women filmmakers, and 2 of the women filmmakers are local West Virginians (both award winning) Deborah Novak and Diana Sole



West Virginia  
Alliance for  
STEM & the ARTS

1308 Evergreen Lane  
Barboursville, West Virginia 25504  
Phone: 304 360 2530  
E-mail: [contact@wvallstar.org](mailto:contact@wvallstar.org)

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Walko. Deborah Novak's "Andre Van Damme and the Story of the Charleston Ballet", a film rich with historical footage and creative choreography, features the story of Van Damme escaping a Nazi work camp to start one of our country's oldest ballet companies. Katherine Johnson shines in the well told and inspiringly produced documentary "Outlier: The Story of Katherine Johnson" by Diana Sole Walko. Sarah Kolberg of Buffalo, New York, and Dr. Maura McLaughlin, of Morgantown, West Virginia, Co-Producers of "little green men", bring a story about an exciting research opportunity – the Pulsar Search Collaboratory - to students like those at Spring Valley High School who are featured in the film. The fifth film, "Wow Signal", directed by Bob Dawson and written by Michael Shaw, is a poignant documentary that tells the story of what's been called "the best evidence of communication from an extraterrestrial civilization" and is currently being shown in only select venues.

WV AllSTAR, Marshall University, and the Green Bank Observatory are excited to bring this free event to the local Marshall University and Greater Huntington communities. In collaboration with the Marshall University COEPD Professional Development Schools (PDS) Partnership, approximately 1,000 middle and high school students will visit Marshall's campus to participate in the event.

The mission behind "Reaching for the Stars...The West Virginia STEM and the Arts Film Festival" is one we all share – to spark an interest in a STEM and/or an Arts field that can lead to a life's work, to promote a better understanding of each other, and to celebrate the story of West Virginia that redefines us as a uniquely beautiful, resilient, resourceful, and creative land of opportunity and achievement. This Festival is the inaugural event in continuing efforts to achieve these goals. Be sure to check [www.wvallstar.org](http://www.wvallstar.org) for more information about the Film Festival and be sure to mark your calendars for these events.

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