

Hollywood, New Hope style



DAVID GARRETT / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A Marilyn Monroe lookalike walks down the red carpet at the Bucks County Playhouse Tuesday night for the premiere of the documentary "Embraceable You," which celebrates the diversity and beauty of New Hope. **Story A6**

A special love

By: FRED A. SAVANA
The Intelligencer

A black-tie affair marked the premiere of a locally produced documentary film about the unique qualities of New Hope.

They arrived in Bentleys and Rolls Royces. They wore tuxedos, sequins, furs and silk. Hollywood would have been envious.

Under a starry night along the Delaware River, local politicians rubbed elbows with celebrity drag queens who walked the red carpet to a pounding back beat while spotlights swept across the sky.

Substitute Joan Rivers with host AggrEschen and it was the Oscars, New Hope style.

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Tuesday's sold-out black-tie event at the Bucks County Playhouse premiered "Embraceable You," the long awaited locally produced documentary film about the one-of-a-kind community.

Dedicated to "people who embrace diversity, celebrate differences, and give new hope to all," the project was the brainchild of Geri Delevich, a longtime borough resident and member of the borough council.

"New Hope has embraced differences throughout its history," said Delevich, adorned in a full-length mink coat outside the playhouse. "We want it to be a model for the rest of the country - not just a dream but a reality."

Ray Velasco, modestly dressed in a sports coat patterned with the tongues featured on the Rolling Stones "Sticky Fingers" album, was basking in the night's energy.

"New Hope deserves this," said the borough councilman, as his photo was being snapped. "New Hope means one word to me and that's freedom."

More than two years in the making, "Embraceable You" includes a short film, a CD and a book.

The documentary, the cornerstone of the project, captures the natural beauty of the small riverside community as well as its history. Through interviews with residents, families and business owners, the unique and rich personality that is New Hope comes to light.

Doug Keith, who wrote and produced the movie, said he was drawn to the project because it focused on "things which bring people together, as opposed to tearing them apart."

In the CD, more than a dozen musicians with a wide range of connections to New Hope perform songs that center on the theme of peace and harmony.

With the town's deep, well-established tradition of supporting the arts and nurturing creativity, the music portion of the project was important to the inspiring endeavor, said Delevich.

The CD features artists such as 2008 New Hope-Solebury High School graduate, Devyn Rush, who originated a role in the Tony-award-winning musical "Spring Awakening," and others like Christine Martucci, who said "New Hope saved my life. I was embraced into the fabric of the gay community. It was a godsend to know there were awesome, caring, wonderful people."

"We're All Part of the Story," the book piece of the project, celebrates the community through 54 writers who present personal perspectives on New Hope and how it impacted their lives.

From remembrances of Selma Burke to stories of the first time they visited the town, each writer speaks of their special love for the small borough.

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