

Embraceable You

Celebrating New Hope Through Film, Song and the Written Word



For decades, New Hope has served as a Mecca for free spirits and artists. The hippies, beatniks, authors and painters that for years flocked to this river town set the stage for a culture of diversity and acceptance. This culture, one in which all walks of life are celebrated and no one is penalized for personal beliefs or sexual orientation, is what makes New Hope, well, New Hope.

And while traditionally, New Hope celebrates its people, Geri Delevich and Marilyn Cichowski are celebrating New Hope. The duo put their minds together to become co-producers of the “Embraceable You” project, an undertaking that began as a documentary film and grew to include a book and CD honoring the eclectic community along the Delaware.

“One of the things that I love about New Hope is that it’s very accepting of people,” says Delevich, who has lived in town for more than 30 years and is a long-time member of the New Hope Borough Council. “It has always been a community that felt like home. We like people who are different here. Regardless of race, religion, creed or sexual orientation, in New Hope, it’s not about that. It’s about who you are as a person, what kind of heart and soul you have.”

The pair believes such a harmonious community dynamic is hard to find. And so Delevich and Cichowski, who founded Up River Productions, Inc. in 2007, set out to capture the story of New Hope on film. Their hope is that the documentary will inspire other communities to also foster a climate that embraces all walks of life.

“New Hope is special, but it doesn’t have to be the only place where it happens,” says Cichowski. “Our message is that hope is reality in places. It’s not a dream, and we have a community that exemplifies that.”

A film crew led by director Doug Keith shot more than 24 hours of interviews with locals, shop owners, police officers, elected officials and tourists to explore just what the secret is to New Hope’s peaceful way of life. The hours of footage was whittled down to a 30-minute documentary that aims to give the world a snapshot into New Hope’s recipe for societal success.

But Delevich and Cichowski didn’t stop with just a documentary. Rather, the film marked just a beginning and ignited a flurry of interest within the community. And in a town of artists and musicians, it’s no surprise the project expanded to include a book and CD.

The book, titled “Embraceable You: We’re All Part of the Story,” features 57 poems, essays and stories about New Hope written from the perspective of a diverse group with their love of the town serving as a common theme. The stories are by residents, artists, shop owners and children among others.

“It’s like a living history,” Delevich says. As a compilation, the stories and poems paint an uplifting picture about the town and how it has evolved over time.



From l-r: Geri Delevich, executive producer of “Embraceable You,” June and Earl Bierman and Doug Keith, writer, director and producer of “Embraceable You.”

According to Delevich, the book happened quite by accident. As word of the documentary began spreading around town, two shop owners on separate occasions approached Delevich and said they had written a story about New Hope.

The trend snowballed and, after officially deciding to expand the project into a book as well, Delevich and Cichowski were inundated with thoughtful prose about their hometown.

“Everybody truly does have a story to tell,” Delevich says, adding that the end result is a treasure that all with a connection to New Hope will enjoy. “We ended up with a great collection of stories.”

The CD, titled “Embraceable You: We’re All Part of the Music,” features 15 songs by musicians that are local to New Hope or have a connection to the town. The songs, like the town, are diverse and range from jazz to rock and beyond. “We just asked that the artists give us songs of peace, songs of harmony, songs that inspire people,” Delevich says.

Both the CD and the book will soon be available for purchase at a number of New Hope establishments, including Farley’s and the Lexington House, Delevich says.

The goal of all three components “is to inspire people and help people to understand there is so much value in

embracing differences,” Delevich explains. And the message has been one that the community has been excited to spread: “It’s been amazing how many people have been so positive about the project.”

Because of the overwhelming support, Delevich and Cichowski expect a full house for the upcoming premiere on Nov. 17 at the Bucks County Playhouse. The evening will feature a screening of the film, readings from the book and musical performances by artists appearing on the accompanying album.

Cichowski and Delevich say the premiere is just the beginning of the next phase of the project: getting it out to the public and hopefully enlightening an audience that extends beyond New Hope. They plan to enter the documentary into several film festivals. Eventually, they may turn “Embraceable You” into a DVD for purchase.

Cichowski says she’s eager to tell the world the story of New Hope. “For people who don’t know New Hope, I think the film will be a wonderful vehicle for them to come experience it,” she says. And maybe, she hopes, it will even inspire some to foster the same practice of acceptance in their own communities.

“Maybe people that don’t know New Hope will say, ‘We can do this,’” Cichowski continues. “In New Hope, ordinary people get to live extraordinarily because when you’re not kept in a box, you grow.” **54**

Tickets to the premiere are \$20 and can be purchased in advance online at the Up River Productions Web site or at Addison Wolfe Real Estate in Union Square, a.k.a. Salon on York Road and the Logan Inn. The “red carpet” event for the premiere begins at 6:30 p.m. The show begins at 7:30 p.m.

Go Online at www.up-river-productions.com