

Brighton Film Festival coming up

showing of 50 films to coincide with nonprofit Art Expo Friday

By Jim Totten
DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Want to know what it was like serving the U.S. Army with The King, Elvis Presley? Or how Ron Bachman, who had both legs amputated as a child, learned to find his own path in life, becoming friends with a famous rock-n-roller and raising a child along the way?

Then stop by, sit down and check out the 50 films that will be shown Friday during the third annual Brighton International Film Festival, the brainchild of Genoa Township resident John Sauve. The film festival will be held along with the Art Expo, which will feature local artwork and information on nonprofit organizations, at the Brighton Center for the Performing Arts.

"If they're interested in the arts, film or their community, this is the place to be," said Sauve, who is heavily involved in bringing public art to Brighton. He's currently in the Mayor's Commission on Art in Public Places and has his own sculpture displayed in Brighton.

"I can't think of a better place to take our family," Sauve said. He said all of the films are appropriate for children. The films last anywhere from 30 seconds to 10 minutes. The final film, featuring Bachman and called "Walk This Way," lasts 30 minutes. Sauve said an estimated 2,000 people

"I can't think of a better place to take your family."

— John Sauve
Creator of the Brighton International Film Festival

attended the first film festival and art expo, and he's hoping for an even bigger turnout this year. The event is free and open to the public.

Sauve is particularly excited this year because Bachman will speak after his film. "Walk This Way" chronicles Bachman's decision to live life on his own terms. After struggling with cumbersome prostheses at school and in public for years, Bachman found he was most comfortable using his hands to get around. Eventually, he abandoned his prostheses altogether.

"His message is no matter how bad you think you have it, your attitude is going to carry you through," Sauve said. He said Bachman is a motivational speaker who gives talks across the country.

Sauve said the festival has two films produced by Brighton students for their class project. He was happy young people were being given a chance to develop this craft and have an outlet.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

■ The 2004 Brighton International Film Festival will feature 50 independent films from 5-9:30 p.m. Friday at the Brighton Center for the Performing Arts.

■ The festival coincides with the Art Expo, featuring local artists and nonprofit groups

■ Public is invited to both events, which are free.

■ The highlight of the festival will be the 9 p.m. showing of "Walk this Way," the Ron Bachman story. Bachman, who had both legs amputated as a child, will speak at 9:30 p.m. after the film.

■ The Brighton High School drum line will open the event with a performance at 4:30 p.m.

■ Nonprofit or art groups that would like to participate should call Brighton Community Education at (810) 299-4130 or John Sauve at (734) 819-3456.

The films are from 30 countries, including Canada, Japan, France, Germany and Italy.

Sauve said people can come watch the films they want and walk next door to the cafeteria to look at various pieces of artwork and learn about nonprofit groups.

"It's a community event," Sauve said.

Subject of 'Walk This Way' to speak after film, share 'power of words'

By Jim Totten
DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Ron Bachman grew up in Detroit riding minibikes and motorcycles, listening to rock 'n' roll and causing trouble. As an adult, Bachman married and had a daughter — and eventually divorced and became a single parent.

Sounds like a typical life, except for one thing: Bachman, now 47, was born with a severe birth defect and had both legs amputated when he was 4.

Bachman's life is chronicled in the short film, "Walk This Way," which will be featured at the Brighton International Film Festival on Friday. Bachman will speak at 9:30 p.m. after the film's showing.

He tried using prostheses but eventually began using his hands to walk around. People staring at him and whispering names behind his back was par for the course when he went to the local grocery store. He could have cried and hid from the world, but Bachman's parents wouldn't have any of that.

"My mother invented tough love," Bachman said.

"You are different, but yet you are not different," Bachman said, recalling his mom's advice. With his parents' love and support, Bachman found his path in life and has accomplished many things. He's friends with rock 'n' roll legends Steven Tyler of Aerosmith and Tommy Lee of Motley Crue, races at the Milan speedway and speaks across the country.

He raised his daughter, Alicia, since she was 4, and the family settled in Northville. Bachman's proud of watching his daughter, now 24, grow up to graduate from Michigan State University and get a job as a pharmaceutical sales representative.

In 1998, after a successful career as a booking agent for bands and radio broadcasts, Bachman's life changed after he was featured on a Detroit news show. He began getting calls from people wanting him to speak.

He now gives diversity training talks for Valassis and DTE Energy and travels all over the U.S. While the corporate speaking pays the bills, Bachman said his favorite activity is speaking at middle and high schools.

Bachman said his motivational talks are direct, and he doesn't tell people what they want to hear. He tells crowds what he knows about life, about bullies and name-calling.

"I know the power of words," Bachman said.

Bachman receives numerous letters after talking with students about how he made a difference in their lives. He's most happy hearing about students who aren't afraid to be different, like burn victims who used to cover up their scars but don't anymore.

"I have the greatest job in the world, and I'm trying to make a difference," Bachman said.