

Press Release

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Contact: Cindy Coleman, 970-946-7660, cindy@duckgirlart.com

Durango Film Transitions

The Durango Independent Film Festival is in the planning stages for their 18th Annual Film Festival – this time with two directors. Joanie Leonard is one of the original founders of DIFF in 2005 and was hired to be the Executive Director in 2007. However, after unexpectedly losing her husband Bruce in 2021 (during the festival), she found that she was ready for a change.

Leonard has moved to Palm Springs, CA to be near family, but is continuing on as the Executive Director for 2023. She is joined by Cornelius Hurley as the Festival Director. Hurley is excited to transition to Festival Director from his current position of Programming. He has been involved with the film festival since 2018 and involved in filmmaking for 20 years. “It has been amazing to work with such a talented and motivated local team here in Durango and I am thrilled to continue to develop this festival, working with filmmakers locally and from all areas of the world.” Cornelius also serves on the board for the Durango Arts Center which serves as a great partner to the festival.

Leonard will continue to run the festival from California, while Hurley can take on any in-person duties in Durango. “I’m very excited for the direction DIFF is taking in making Cornelius Festival Director, while he continues to manage the Programming teams. His knowledge and experience as a filmmaker are huge benefits as we strive to continue championing independent filmmakers. I enjoy collaborating with Cornelius on festival projects as we gear up for our 18th annual festival. I love this organization, however recent life changes led me to wanting to live closer to family. I’m thrilled that I get to continue working behind the scenes remotely and I’ll be back in February/March to assist our wonderful DIFF volunteer staff and festival volunteers before and during the festival.”

The 18th Annual Durango Independent Film Festival will take place March 1-5, 2023, with a Virtual Festival March 6-11, 2023. Early, Early Bird Passes are on sale through October 31, 2022 at www.durangofilm.org.