



**For Immediate Release:**

**PHILOMENA AND COMEDY WARRIORS TAKE TOP PRIZES AT INAUGURAL  
MIDDLEBURG FILM FESTIVAL**

Audiences select their favorites among a slate of twenty of the upcoming season's most anticipated titles

**October 30, 2013** –More than 2500 film enthusiasts converged on the Virginia countryside this weekend for the first Middleburg Film Festival. Attendees were treated to a carefully curated slate of exceptional films that both entertained and engaged audiences.

Upon its completion, Festival founder Sheila C. Johnson announced the winners of the Audience Awards for Best Documentary Feature and Best Narrative Feature.

“I am so pleased that our audience chose to recognize **COMEDY WARRIORS: HEALING THROUGH HUMOR** and **PHILOMENA**,” said Johnson. “We had so many compelling titles I know it was difficult to choose a ‘best’ among this incredible fare.

“We would like to thank all the distributors for giving us the opportunity to showcase their remarkable films,” Johnson added. “And thank you to Paramount Pictures and The Weinstein Company in particular for providing the Opening Night film, **NEBRASKA**, and the Centerpiece film, **MANDELA: LONG WALK TO FREEDOM**, respectively.”

**COMEDY WARRIORS: HEALING THROUGH HUMOR** from director John Wager tells the story of five severely wounded Iraq/Afghanistan veterans who were given the opportunity to explore their experiences through the healing power of humor. The film follows their journey as they work with professional comedy writers, and A-List comedians: Zach Galifianakis, Lewis Black, Bob Saget, and B.J. Novak, who help them write and perform their own personal stand-up comedy routines, culminating in one big night performing at LA's top comedy clubs.

**PHILOMENA** from acclaimed director Stephen Frears is based on the 2009 investigative book by BBC correspondent Martin Sixsmith, [The Lost Child of Philomena Lee](#). The film focuses on the efforts of Philomena Lee (Judi Dench), mother to a boy conceived out of wedlock — something her Irish-Catholic community didn't have the highest opinion of — and given away for adoption in the United States. Following the rules of the convent where she gives birth, she's made to sign a contract that forbids inquiry into her son's whereabouts. Years later, Philomena meets Martin Sixsmith (Steve Coogan), a BBC reporter with whom she sets out to discover her long-lost son.

“Middleburg played host to a tremendous weekend of storytelling,” added Festival Executive Director Susan Koch. “While conversations are fresh in our minds from this glorious first time endeavor, all of us associated with the Middleburg Film Festival are eager to jump back in and plan year two.”

Winners were chosen by audience ballot.

### **About Middleburg Film Festival**

The Middleburg Film Festival offers four days of films in a spectacular setting. A carefully curated selection of narrative and documentary films will screen in an intimate theatre environment, followed by Q and A’s with filmmakers and actors. The films include festival favorites, premieres, and Academy Award contenders.

Venues throughout Middleburg include the National Sporting Library, Hill School, Middleburg Community Center, the newly opened Salamander Resort & Spa (the official filmmaker venue) and Boxwood Winery.

Festival attendees experience the natural beauty, local food and wine and warm hospitality of historic Middleburg and the Piedmont countryside at the height of fall foliage. The intimate and relaxed settings provide the ideal backdrop for bringing together filmmakers, actors, opinion leaders, journalists, and filmgoers to engage in conversation and celebrate the best in film.

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### **Media Contacts:**

PR Collaborative

Renée Tsao

[renee@prcollaborative.com](mailto:renee@prcollaborative.com)

Gabrielle Flamand

[gabrielle@prcollaborative.com](mailto:gabrielle@prcollaborative.com)

(202) 339-9598

