

## NH resort hotel partners with RI on film gathering



By Kathy McCormack, Associated Press Writer | August 6, 2010

CONCORD, N.H. --One of northern New Hampshire's resort hotels is going to work with Rhode Island's International Film Festival to host a four-day film gathering of its own.

The nonprofit North Country Film Festival is being held Sept. 30 to Oct. 3 at the Balsams Grand Resort Hotel in Dixville Notch. Some films from New Hampshire will be included.

The idea is to encourage tourism and support for the arts and businesses in the North Country, which has lost hundreds of jobs in recent years with the closing of some companies, such as a pulp mill in Berlin and the Ethan Allen furniture plant in nearby Canaan, Vt.

"We thought, 'What can we do that would bring tourism up, give the community pride and be a morale booster?'" said Gary Armitage, vice president of sales and new business development at the Balsams.

The area is flooded with tourists in the early fall, but "once leaf change is over, it's pretty much finished up here," Armitage said. The festival extends the season for area hotels and employment, he said.

The 8,000-acre resort, which began as a 25-room summer inn after the Civil War, has hosted many celebrities through the years, including the Marx Brothers, comedians Will Rogers and Jerry Lewis, and actress Margaret O'Brien.

It's also known for its ballot room. The villages of Dixville Notch and Hart's Location cast the country's first Election Day ballots for president.

The event would be separate from the annual New Hampshire Film Festival in Portsmouth that runs Oct. 14-17 and draws about 9,000 people. There's also the S.N.O.B. -- Somewhat North of Boston -- Film Festival scheduled for Nov. 19-21 in Concord.

The Rhode Island festival, called "Flickers," is in its 14th year and runs Aug. 10-15. It is a qualifying event for Academy Award short film submissions. The festival has grown so big that it can't screen all of the 4,200 films submitted this year, so the northern New Hampshire event will show some of them.

Organizers hope the festival will be the start of a "creative economy" for year-round events promoting the arts, Armitage said.

George Marshall, executive director and CEO of the Rhode Island festival, said the festival might expand future film screenings to surrounding communities in New Hampshire and in Canada.

"I think the idea behind it makes good sense. We mix art with business and hopefully build jobs," he said. "Because if it can get people up there even to shoot stuff, that's economic development that drops money."

As many as five films will be shown at once throughout the Balsams, including the ballot room. Categories include Franco-American culture, comedy, drama, fantasy and romance. Marshall estimates 50 to 70 titles would be shown. ■

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