

Watchung Hills Regional High School Hall of Fame



Andrew Cohen
Film-maker, Teacher
Class of 1975

Even as a student in Watchung Hill's "Visual Image" class, Andy Cohen's talents as a filmmaker were recognized. Even then, he was garnering awards in statewide film-making competitions, such as the New Jersey Young Filmmakers Festivals. Not unexpectedly, Andy pursued his dream of becoming a filmmaker at the School of Visual Arts in New York City and has remained in film/video production ever since, making films with significant societal messages.

Presently, Andy employs his expertise teaching adolescents and young adults at a Quaker secondary school, the Brooklyn Friends School. Impelled to share his passion for filmmaking, he created a student film festival in the spring of 2000. His goal was to encourage students to produce work containing a message of concern, while at the same time reflecting Quaker values in action.

The films would be judged by educators, filmmakers, activists and Quakers, and so the Bridge Film Festival at the Brooklyn Friends School was born. The festival has continued, ever improving in both the quality of films submitted and the number of Friends Schools from around the world that participate. (Entries from Canada, Palestine, Lebanon, the United Kingdom, and, of course, from Friends Schools across the U.S.A., have participated.)

For its tenth anniversary, the Bridge Festival went "across the water" to England, where Quakerism began, holding its competition at the Ackworth School (founded in 1779). This "catapulted us into the digital age," said Andy, and led to the formation of a web-site, You Tube, Video-news segments, DVD's. "This would offer all of the Friends Schools and Meetings in the world to download the finalist entries and build their own DVD's for presentation," Andy said.