

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MediaRights.org Celebrates its One-Year Anniversary with the 1st Annual Media That Matters Online Film Festival**

May 1, 2001 \_ MediaRights.org, the New York-based community Web site for social-issue documentaries, will mark its one-year anniversary with the 1st Annual Media That Matters Online Film Festival, launching June 15th, 2001, at [www.mediarights.org/festival](http://www.mediarights.org/festival). The Media That Matters Online Film Festival (MTMOFF), co-presented with the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival and streamed online with the support of Reelplay.com, will present 12 short films and PSAs produced by independent media makers and activists from across the country. The films will also be accessible to the public, during this year's Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, June 15-28, 2001, on computer terminals installed in the Frieda and Roy Furman Gallery at the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center (70 Lincoln Center Plaza, New York City). All of the works screened during the festival will be streamed online for one year on MediaRights.org. FreeSpeechTV will present a special one-month broadcast of the entire festival program on Dish Network's Channel 9415, beginning June 18th, 2001. *(Please see film descriptions at <http://www.mediarights.org/festival/festfildes.php>)*

The films in this year's MTMOFF address a range of timely social and political topics including the environment, healthcare, and youth issues. The MTMOFF will be accessible from any internet-capable computer with 56K connection or faster. In addition to viewing the works online, festival attendees or users will be able to directly interact with the film programming and take action around the social issues presented. Viewers will have the opportunity to participate in cyber forums with filmmakers; write to Congress; make donations to organizations and causes; and read detailed information about issues raised in a particular film. Jessica Hirsch, Festival Coordinator says, "One of the goals of the festival is to highlight films that can inspire people to get involved and make a difference by becoming part of the solution."

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MediaRights.org, the presenter of the MTMOFF, was founded in July of 2000 by Julia Pimsleur and Katy Chevigny, partners at the New York-based documentary production company Big Mouth Productions. Pimsleur conceived of the idea for MediaRights.org in 1999 during a meeting of activists and media makers at the Ford Foundation. She spearheaded the idea of developing a not-for-profit Web site as a tool for sharing information about social-issue film projects and making documentaries and advocacy videos more accessible to filmmakers, activists, educators, and librarians. The interactive Web site is organized around 14 social issues (e.g. racial, environmental, economic justice, etc.) and contains a collection of over 1,500 social documentaries. The site also provides an extensive database of over 640,000 nonprofits in the U.S., a list of funding

and other resources, and original articles.

Pimsleur explains, "There is a real need for a bridge between filmmakers and the communities they are trying to reach with their films." Nicole Betancourt, Creative Director continues, "The Web site reflects not only what is happening in documentary production but the important social issues affecting communities today." Among the other staff responsible for developing and maintaining the Web site include: Jenny Baum, Associate Creative Director and Marc Antony Vose, Technical Lead.

MediaRights.org was launched with the initial funding from the Ford Foundation and Open Society Institute. Festival sponsors include Daffy's and individual contributors. Festival partners include the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, SpeakOut.com, ReelPlay.com, AIVF, and the Benton Foundation.

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*For more information about MediaRights.org and the Media That Matters Online Film Festival, contact Wellington Love at 15minutes, 646-486-1548 or wellingtonlove@15minutespr.com.*