



## THE VALUE OF UNAFF TO PALO ALTO AND THE NEED FOR CITY SUPPORT

The **United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF)** is an award-winning international cultural and educational festival focused on documentary films aligned with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Those universal rights proclaim freedoms and lack of discrimination for all people regardless of race, sex, language, religion, political opinion, or social origin, which are the basis for all the struggles we have been fighting to improve our society. The same goes for the authors, as the 2023 UNAFF program included works by **56% women filmmakers** and **60% filmmakers of color**.

- UNAFF is a well-established institution, currently in its 27th year of bringing national and international attention to Palo Alto and is frequently described as the most important ongoing cultural event in Palo Alto while reinforcing shared values between Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, and Stanford.
- It provides a variety of year-round series of events and activities, culminating in the two-week October festival.
- It is a community resource that straddles the intersection of art, education, and community engagement, as it offers to Palo Altans topics aligned with our City Council Priorities and community values as well as providing a forum for civil discourse about complex political and social issues.
- It presents an educational resource for youth and area schools, particularly on topics like civic engagement, diversity, equity and inclusion, climate change and sustainability.
- It engages marginalized groups, like seniors, disadvantaged communities, and veterans.
- It bridges the divides between racial and ethnic groups, leading to better understanding in our diverse community.
- Through its Traveling Festival, it promotes Palo Alto in other cities and countries and offers cultural connections and reinforces common values, including with Palo Alto sister cities.
- It promotes Palo Alto on the list of interesting places that filmmakers and film lovers around the world have become aware of.
- It brings guests to Palo Alto and customers to its hotels and businesses.
- It collaborates with local hotels, restaurants, local media and other local companies.
- By showcasing a cross-section of the world and its problems, it sparks diverse ideas and solutions within the local innovation economy.

- Unlike single-focus nonprofits, UNAFF is an educational and cultural platform for exploring numerous issues, collaborating with 30-40 other organizations in the area, and many others from other cities and countries, e.g. the Consulate General of Denmark in Palo Alto.
- Like other cities with film festivals, Palo Alto benefits from the positive promotion of its wider appeal beyond being the home of technology.
- It adds a cosmopolitan dimension to Palo Alto residents and workers by offering an opportunity to better understand the world.

Notwithstanding its broad contributions, UNAFF operates on a very modest budget. The support of the City of Palo Alto is essential to its programs. We would like to ask the City to continue their invaluable support for the 27<sup>th</sup> UNAFF in October 17-27, 2024 with its contribution of \$35,000 plus covering the banners on the University Avenue and waiving the cost of the screening location Mitchell Park Community Center.

In addition, we would also like to request \$20, 000 for the year-round UNAFF Palo Alto based Special Programs. This would allow us to maintain our ongoing series of free **UNAFF in Libraries** screenings and reinstate our much-demanded **UNAFF for Seniors** programs, which screens in senior centers in Palo Alto. It would also go a long way toward the free **UNAFF and Kids** and **UNAFF in Schools** programs, through which we have devoted our attention to the young and re-energize other aspects of our work which enrich our community, like **UNAFF with Veterans**, and the **UNAFF Panels** program, which provides a platform for some of the best experts addressing challenging topics. These programs were scaled back because of Covid, but now the demand has returned and we find ourselves challenged to respond to it adequately because of funding constraints.

An additional area where the city may be able to help UNAFF is lending a hand in our long-time dream to establish a permanent home in Palo Alto for a **UNAFF Documentary Film Institute**, which would be a center for workshops, conferences, presentations, collaborations, lectures, courses, research and the home to our vast **UNAFF Archive**. The **Archive**, which is now languishing in public storage, currently has 10,000 uniquely valuable films and offers a plethora of research materials for students of film, politics, environment, social issues and international relations. The **Archive** would allow access to films on a multitude of timely topics that can be presented in response to City or community requests. A space of two small rooms and potential access to a larger room for screenings would allow us the stability to fully leverage and grow UNAFF's potential through its various programs, like the **UNAFF Café**, which maintains a steady supply of interesting films and informal discussions, or the **UNAFF Women's Salon**, a forum where women can gather informally for discussions in a supportive and engaging environment.

Thank you again for your ongoing support.