

CONTACT:

Rina Thaler

Art League of Ocean City

Ocean City Center for the Arts

410-524-9433

rthaler@artleagueofoceancity.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ocean City Film Festival Announces Winners of 9th Annual OC Film Challenge

OCEAN CITY, MD — Aug. 26, 2026 — The Ocean City Film Festival premiered entries from the 9th Annual Ocean City Film Challenge on Saturday, Aug. 8, on the 94th St. tennis courts and announced the winners. The three top films will be screened at the 11th Annual Ocean City Film Festival in March 2027.

Filmmakers were challenged to produce an original short film about Ocean City no longer than 10 minutes and made between July 1 and July 31, 2026. Films must have been shot in Ocean City or be about Ocean City and include a secret line of dialogue.

Twelve entries were received in the challenge. Special guest juror James Dufendach, Coordinator of the Ocean City Comic Con, selected the entries and winners.

The 2026 Ocean City Film Challenge winners are:

First place — The Haunting of Ocean City, directed by Holden Connor. Former small-time drug dealer Jackson Gallagher is haunted by a spooky figure from a painting while working the night shift at the Ocean Gallery. The film runs 8 minutes.

Second place — Jamal from Senegal, directed by Marlon Wallace. When his cousin, a police detective, finds out he's involved with criminal activity, Jamal has to decide to fight against or with his family. The film runs 10 minutes.

Third place — Ocean City Life, Wow, What a Ride!, directed by PAC 14. Himalaya ride operator Gerry Burnes is about to retire after 40 years of Boardwalk dreams. His only wish is to do it all again with his lifelong love. Wow. What a ride. The film runs 7 minutes.

Audience Choice Award — Vampires of Ocean City, directed by Torrez Wise. Two feuding factions of vampires land in Ocean City, where their long-standing peace treaty is broken as a battle ensues for possession of The Chosen Girl. The film runs 10 minutes.

The 2026 Ocean City Film Challenge Premiere & Awards Night brought filmmakers, supporters, volunteers, and film lovers together to celebrate another year of local filmmaking and creativity.

A special thank you goes to this year's judge, James Dufendach for lending his time and expertise to the competition. The Ocean City Film Festival also extends a huge thank you to all of the volunteers who helped make the evening possible.

Congratulations to all of the 2026 winners and to every filmmaker who took on this year's challenge. The winning films reflect the creativity, originality, and community spirit that continue to make the Ocean City Film Challenge a special part of the local arts scene.

And the films don't stop here. The Ocean City Film Festival will return for Season 11, March 4–7, 2027, welcoming filmmakers and film lovers back to Ocean City for another unforgettable festival. Visit OCMDFilmFestival.com for updates on upcoming events and ticket sales.

The Ocean City Film Festival and the Ocean City Film Challenge are programs of the nonprofit Art League of Ocean City. More information is available at OCart.org or by calling 410-524-9433.

The Art League of Ocean City is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing the visual arts to the community through education, exhibits, scholarship, programs and community art projects. Funding for this event is in part provided by the Maryland State Arts Council and the National Endowment of the Arts, organizations dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive.