

# body & soul

*diana & kathy*

CAN TWO PEOPLE SHARE ONE LIFE ?



DIRECTOR, CINEMATOGRAPHER, PRODUCER ALICE ELLIOTT PRODUCER SIMONE PERO AUDI EDITOR, STORYCONSULTANT ROSE ROSENBLATT  
ORIGINAL MUSIC RICK BAITZ ASSOCIATE PRODUCER JULIA WRONA AND M.Y.R.A. PRODUCTIONS



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BODY & SOUL: DIANA & KATHY is a co-production of Alice Elliott and the Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). Executive Producer for ITVS - Sally Jo Fifer.

***Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy***  
**Press Kit**

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## BODY & SOUL: DIANA & KATHY

### Synopsis

*Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* directed by Academy Award nominee Alice Elliott, is a rare look at an unusual relationship between two people some would call profoundly disabled. Two remarkable advocates for people with disabilities, Diana Braun who has Down syndrome and Kathy Conour who has cerebral palsy, met three decades ago and vowed to fight to live independent lives. Fearful of being shut away in a nursing home or forced into a state run institution, Diana and Kathy broke the rules, escaped the system, and modeled a grand experiment in independent living. Told in an intimate, verité style, *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* is a story of a profound, creative friendship and about making a difference.

Award-winning director Alice Elliott is known for making intimate films about people who are traditionally overlooked. For five years, Elliott was allowed extraordinary access to Diana and Kathy's lives so she could introduce mainstream audiences to a way of life rarely seen on screen.

## **Body & Soul: Synopses**

25 words:

Two women with disabilities live independent lives advocating for others. When aging and a medical crisis threaten their freedom, they attempt to meet the challenge.

50 words:

*Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* is a rare look at a crisis in an unusual relationship between two people with disabilities. The story moves beyond disability and activism to acceptance of a profound, symbiotic friendship. Shot in an intimate, verité style, it allows the viewer into a private world.

61 words:

*Body and Soul: Diana and Kathy* is about two disability rights activists, Diana Braun and Kathy Conour. Diana, who has Down syndrome, and Kathy, who has cerebral palsy, met at a sheltered workshop in Illinois three decades ago and vowed to fight to live independent lives. When aging and a medical crisis threaten their freedom, they attempt to meet the challenge.

200 words:

*Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy*, directed by Academy Award nominee Alice Elliott, is a new short documentary about two disability rights activists, Diana Braun and Kathy Conour. Diana, who has Down syndrome, and Kathy, who has cerebral palsy, met at a sheltered workshop in Illinois three decades ago and vowed to fight to live independent lives. Fearful of being shut away in a nursing home or forced into a state run institution, they broke the rules and escaped the system. Not content to earn menial wages and have their living situation change with the whim of government appropriations, Diana learned to drive, they moved, built their own house, and survived to tell their story. *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* chronicles their ongoing struggle to live independently outside of institutions, Diana's desperate search to reconnect with her abusive mother, and the law-breaking journey they take to Washington, D.C. to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. For Diana and Kathy, this is a journey that's physically dangerous and technically illegal, so the stakes are uncommonly high. *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* is a story of a profound, creative friendship and about making a difference.

Additional information can be found at [www.dianaandkathy.com](http://www.dianaandkathy.com)

## **Production Notes**

### *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy*

*Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* almost didn't happen. When Diana Braun and Kathy Conour approached Alice Elliott, and asked her to make a film about them, Ms. Elliott, an Academy Award nominated filmmaker, was reluctant. She had just spent 5 years making her previous film, *The Collector of Bedford Street*, and wasn't ready to plunge into another project. However, it had been Kathy's life long dream to have a documentary made about her, so she wouldn't give up. After visiting Diana and Kathy in Springfield, Illinois, Alice realized what unique subjects they would be and was won over by Kathy's persistence. For five years, Diana and Kathy gave Alice complete access to their lives. During that time they shot in Washington, DC, Springfield, Il, and Chicago.

**DIANA BRAUN**  
*biography*

As an 8 year old child, Diana Braun found herself living in a state run nursing home in Freeport, Illinois. Taken away from an abusive family, Diana and her brothers and sisters were scattered. At 12 she was sent to the Dixon Developmental Center. She vowed to one day close those institutions and has devoted her life to doing just that. She has also taken the ambitious job of personal assistant or PA to her friend and housemate, Kathy Conour.

At 19 Diana left Dixon, a state run institution. Since that time her activist commitments have led her to be president of People First, a self-advocates group, and a member of the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities. Currently she serves on the board of the Illinois Arc, an organization involved in advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities. Illinois is one of the states that still has a large number of people living in institutions, so Diana has her hands full with her advocacy work and her personal assistant tasks.

Almost yearly, Diana travels with Kathy to present at conferences and visit elected representatives. In February of 2005 they went to Washington and met with the offices of Senators Obama and Dirksen.

Diagnosed with Down syndrome, Diana drives, cooks, maintains her home and attends to the needs of her friend of 37 years, Kathy Conour. Diana is an active participant at her church and attends an annual retreat for people with disabilities. At home her cat, Trouble, keeps her out of trouble.

**KATHY CONOUR**  
*biography*

Kathy Conour, grew up as an only child on Bates Avenue in Springfield, Illinois. She attended high school in Chicago. Her first job took her to a sheltered workshop in Ottawa, Illinois. Despite the objections of her parents, she was determined to live independently. To avoid being placed in a nursing home, Kathy had to find a solution. So when she met Diana Braun at the same sheltered workshop in 1970, Kathy teamed up with Diana. It was a good match. They began a friendship that has lasted 37 years.

After trying foster care, Diana and Kathy found their first apartment and began their experiment in interdependent living. While living in Kankakee, she and Diana became frustrated with the high cost of taking cabs everywhere. Diana took two years of studying, but eventually learned to drive. With the mobility of a van, they began to travel more.

Kathy received her Bachelor degree in English from Olivet Nazarene College with a minor in business administration. Using an electronic communication device, Kathy writes articles, responds to email and makes speeches.

Born with cerebral palsy, Kathy had some mobility but lost that when she had to have an operation on a spinal cyst in 1990. Diana compliments Kathy's skills and helps Kathy in and out of her power chair, attends to her personal needs like dressing and eating, and helps her answer email.

Kathy is a leader and an activist. She pursues positions of leadership and advocacy. Currently she serves on the board of United Cerebral Palsy of Illinois. In the past she has been active in the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Illinois Center for Independent Living, and People first. A well-know activist on the national scene, she is often invited to speak and present.

FULL RESUME AND FILMOGRAPHY  
ALICE ELLIOTT

**Alice Elliott** was the director, producer, and cinematographer on *The Collector of Bedford Street* which was nominated for a 2002 Academy Award® in the Short Documentary Category, won Best Documentary, the Audience Award, and The Horizon Award at its world premiere at the Aspen Short Film Festival. In addition to these award winning screenings, *The Collector of Bedford Street* has won 19 awards and been seen at over 50 film festivals around the world. It was broadcast on HBO/Cinemax in May of 2003. *The Collector of Bedford Street* is distributed by New Day Films, a filmmaker owned and run cooperative.

She produced the award winning documentary *Diamonds in the Rough* about the inner city baseball team at George Washington High School in Washington Heights, Manhattan. *Diamonds* won best documentary at the South Beach Film Festival, was screened at the Denver International Film Festival, Taos Talking Pictures, San Antonio, and Wine Country Film Festivals. It received an award at the Columbus Film Festival and a National Educational Media Bronze Apple Award.

She co-produced *Grist for the Mill*, directed by Cynthia Wade that aired on Cinemax, June 1999.

As a writer, she wrote for the Nickelodeon series, *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* and her three plays for young audiences have been published and produced in New York City and around the country. She teaches for NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and NYU's School of Continuing and Professional Studies. Before writing and directing she worked as an actress and performed for 10 years on the ABC daytime television drama, *Loving*.

She served on the Board as Secretary for New York Women in Film and Television, attended the Women in Film and Television International Summit, and co-chaired the Scholarship Committee. Currently she is the videographer for Judson Memorial Church.

Her production company is called Welcome Change and seeks to marry artistically successful films with positive social change. It is also a play on words because the company accepts small amounts of money.

**FILMOGRAPHY:**

1997 Producer            *Diamonds in the Rough*

Winner Best Documentary South Beach Film Festival, Denver International Film Festival, Taos Talking Pictures, San Antonio, and Wine Country Film Festivals. It received an award at the Columbus Film Festival and a National Educational Media Bronze Apple Award.

1999 Co- Producer            *Grist for the Mill*

St. John's Women's International Film Festival, Westchester Film Festival, aired on HBO/Cinemax.

2001 Producer/Director      *The Collector of Bedford Street*

Nominated for an Academy Award® in the short documentary category. It won Best Documentary, the Audience Award, and The Horizon Award at its world premiere at the Aspen Short Film Festival. At the USA Festival it won the Family Award. At the Florida Film Festival, it won both the Audience Award for favorite short film and the Florida Forever Filmmaker Award honoring the film that best represents insights into the human condition. It was a part of the National Council on Foundations touring festival and was awarded a Henry Hampton Award from the Council. It was selected by the Heartland Festival to receive a Crystal Heart Award and won both the Best Documentary and a special citation at the Silver Street Film and Video Festival. At the Big Bear Lake Festival the film won the Jury Prize for Best Documentary, and at the Ojai Film Festival it won the Theme Award for the film that best embodies the overall theme of the festival. The Black Maria Festival honored *Collector* with a Directors Choice Award. At the Director's View Film Festival it won the Jury Prize for Best Short Documentary. TASH (The Action Starts Here) honored *Collector* with an Image award and at the International Health and Medical Media Awards the film was a finalist in Special People for the FREDDIE Award. *Collector* also received an honorable mention at the Picture...This Film Festival, an Award for Excellence in Documentary from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture and the Dream Award from the Western Disability Law Center.

In addition to these award winning screenings, *The Collector of Bedford Street* has been shown at the Mumbai International FF in India, One World Berlin, Brazil's International Disability Film Festival, the Abilities Festival's International Disability Film Festival in Toronto, Jewish Eye- World Jewish Film Festival Tel Aviv, Mexico Jewish FF, Berlin Jewish Film Festival, One World in the Czech Republic, and The Barcelona Jewish Film Festival. The film has also screened at the Colorado Springs Haddassah, Hartland Jewish, Detroit's Lenore Marwil Jewish, the Maine Jewish, the Miami Jewish, Nashville Jewish, North Carolina Jewish, Palm Beach Jewish, Pittsburg Jewish, Rochester Jewish, Boston Jewish, Rockland Jewish, San Diego Jewish, Seattle Jewish, Tucson Jewish, New Jersey Jewish and the Sid Jacobson JCC Film Festivals. In addition the film has been to the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Susan Himmelman Shapiro Twin Cities Festival of Jewish Film in Minnesota, the Anchorage, Arizona International, Atlanta Film & Video, Athens Ohio, Frame by Frame, Great Lakes, Margaret Mead, Mill Valley, New Orleans, Newport Beach, Orinda, Perspectives and the Rocky Mountain Women's Film Festivals. As well as, the Ashland Oregon, Durango, Pensacola International, Portland International, SchmoozeDance, Big Sky Documentary, Montana, Chicago International Doc, Detroit Docs, Director's View, Empire, San Diego Film Society, Silver Lake, Sprout and the St. Louis International Film Festivals.

2002-2006 Director/Co-producer      *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy*

A rare look at a crises in an unusual relationship between two people with disabilities. The story moves beyond disability and activism to acceptance of a profound, symbiotic friendship. Shot in an intimate, verite style, it allows the viewer into a private world. .

2006 Director/Producer      *Two Weddings and a Future*

Full length documentary about the two weddings and marriage of a Down Syndrome couple, as they try to bring together their Hindu and Christian traditions.

**SIMONE PERO**  
***Producer***

Simone Pero has helped shape nationally recognized campaigns for more than 15 years. As founder of For Impact Productions, LLC., Simone specializes in documentary film and creatively connecting messages to a wide variety of audiences. She most recently produced the documentary film *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* with Academy Award nominated director Alice Elliott, funded in part by the Independent Television Service (ITVS). *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* will have its television broadcast premiere in October 2009 on public television. Simone was also consulting producer for Jennifer Fox's six-part documentary series *Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman*, which had its North American premiere at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and aired on the Sundance Channel in 2008. Additionally, she has worked on Thom Powers' *Loving & Cheating* for HBO and Myra Sito Velasquez's *The Lovers* and is in development on her first feature documentary, *The Place Between*.

Prior to her film career, Simone worked in cable television and in national politics. Simone has completed the Sundance Institute's Independent Producers program, is an active member of New York Women in Film and Television's Documentary Committee, has written for the International Documentary magazine and is teaching at DCTV. She holds a master's degree in Public Affairs and Policy and is completing a second graduate degree in Media Studies.

**Crew List – *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy***

Director, Producer, Cinematographer  
Alice Elliott

Producer  
Simone Pero

Editor and Story Consultant  
Rose Rosenblatt

Associate Producers  
Julia Wrona  
Margarethe Baillou  
& M.Y.R.A. Productions

Original Music by  
Rick Baitz

Assistant Editor  
Julia Wrona

Second Camera  
Liz Gawne

Additional Cinematography  
Craig Lindvahl

Title Design  
Victoria Faust

Production Assistants  
Kristine Ekman  
Heidi Goldstein  
Patrick Greenlee  
Dan Greenman  
Heidi Hasbrouck  
Annie Moor  
Monica Orbe  
Jonathan Stout

On-line Editor and Color Correction  
Steve Pequignot

Sound Editor  
Greg Sextro

**Crew List – *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* (cont.)**

Re-recording Mixer

David Wilson

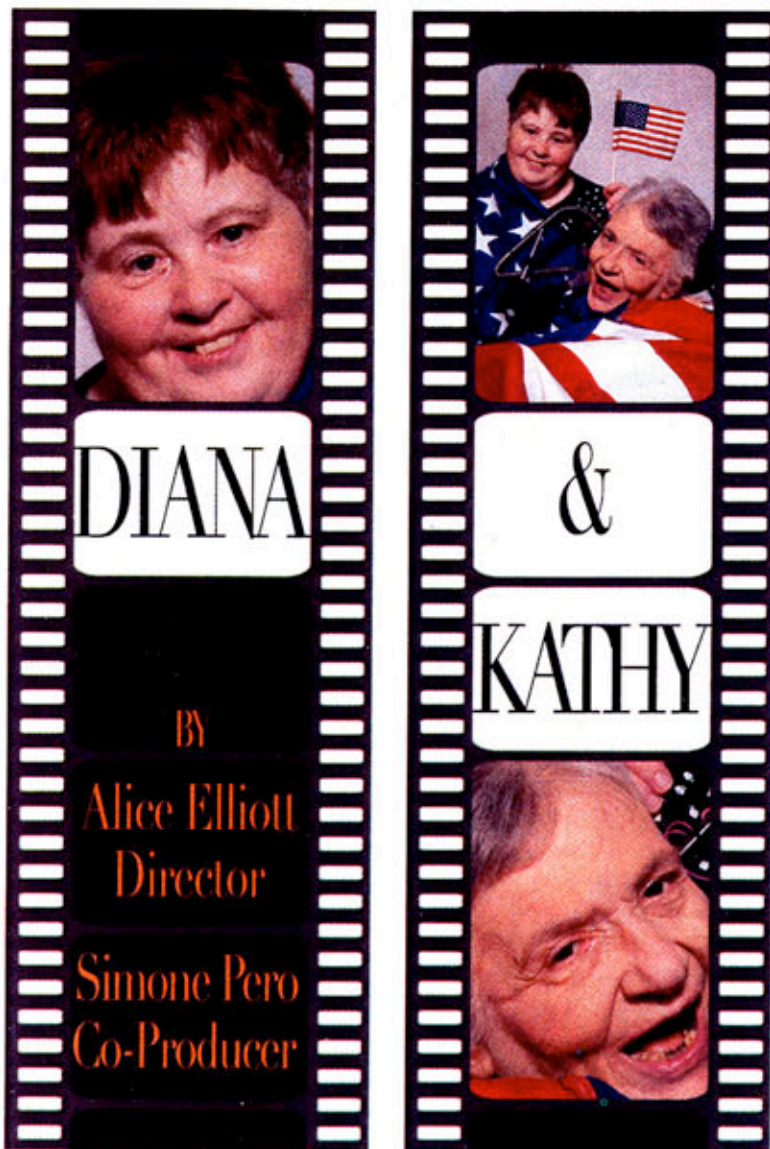
Studio Sound Recording

Dave Weissman

Full House Productions Inc.

Executive Producer for ITVS Sally Jo Fifer

BODY & SOUL: DIANA & KATHY is a co-production of Alice Elliott and the Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).



**W**hen Diana Braun and Kathy Conour met 38 years ago in a foster home, they never imagined their lives would intertwine and later be documented on film. Now, living in their own home in Springfield, IL, Diana is not only Kathy's personal assistant, but also her companion and lifelong friend.

Here, they answer questions about their lives and their experiences in the making of the short documentary, *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy*. Diana answers some questions for herself, and others as Kathy's interpreter. Filmmaker, Alice Elliott, also weighs in. Her previous doc, *The Collector of Bedford Street* was nominated for a 2002 Academy Award. Simone Pero, Elliott's producer, conducts the interview.

*Simone: When did you first become activists?*

Diana: In 1980. Our landlord at the time did not want to rent apartments to people with disabilities. We knew he was playing games with us. So, we called a lawyer to help us stop the discrimination. Kathy was lucky to have her parents, a good lawyer and money. This experience inspired us to keep fighting for the rights of people with

disabilities. Later, Kathy worked as the advocacy coordinator at the Center for Independent Living, writing articles and networking.

*Simone: In the documentary, audiences see you both at political rallies as well as when you are lobbying your legislators. Do you think conditions are improving for people with disabilities in this country?*

Diana & Kathy: We have more rights for people with disabilities today because of the ADA. So, they can now get around on buses. We are also glad about a 1999 Supreme Court decision, which allowed people with disabilities to live in the least restrictive environment. But, there is still a long way to go.

*Simone: What are the big issues today facing people with disabilities?*

Diana & Kathy: We want more jobs for people with disabilities. We want better communities, better housing and a better life. Money and funding should support a person's choice of where and how they want to live.

*Simone: What advice do you have for others who want to live outside institutions?*

Diana & Kathy: They should make sure they get backup up Personal Assistants (PAs). PAs don't make much money. We need to pay them. It is not easy to find good PAs. The main ingredient is more support.

*Simone: How did you meet Alice?*

Diana & Kathy: At a Columbus, OH, screening of her film, *The Collector of Bedford Street*.

Diana: After the film was over, Kathy poked me and asked me to tell her about Alice. We waited outside until she came out. After that, Kathy kept emailing her.

*Simone: What has it been like for you to have someone filming you?*

Diana & Kathy: It felt good. We want people to see us, so they can have a similar, good life. We want them to see that we have the same experiences they do. The more we do that the better.

Diana: Sometimes it was hard to be filmed. But we kept going.

*Simone: Does anything surprise you when you attend screenings of the film?*

Diana: A lot of people have tears come out of their

eyes. Kathy didn't expect a great response from audiences, but I expected a great response.

*Simone: What have you been doing with the film?*

Diana: We are traveling with it. Recently, we went to Seattle and Atlanta to accept awards for the film. Next summer, we're going to Kankakee, IL, to show the film and talk about it afterwards.

*Simone: Kathy, how have you been feeling lately?*

Kathy: I'm feeling better now, but I'm old. I'm getting a new chair soon and I hope it will be better. In this one, my hip moves and the seat doesn't mold to me. I also have to pay a private nurse now. It's not right I have to pay. Medicare doesn't like to buy new chairs. They want people to use manual wheelchairs, but it doesn't make sense for people who can't use their limbs. Medicare rules need to change.

*Simone: Alice, what are your hopes for the film?*

Alice: I want everyone in the country to see this film, because many people are uninformed about the simple challenges people with disabilities face every day. Having the film shown on public TV will be a step towards achieving our goal. This is an exciting time because it's an election year. Lobbying and advocacy can make a real difference. We believe the lobbying Diana and Kathy did in the film has influenced Senator Obama's policy on employment and disability. This is democracy in action. His campaign recently came out with a statement that he wants to change the Medicare laws so people don't lose their benefits if they leave their homes. The current law states that people who receive Medicare home health care are only allowed to go to the doctor, to church and to the beauty or barbershop.

As legislators become more informed, we will see large, unsafe institutions close and people become more integrated into their communities. Kathy McGinley from the Disability Law Center says that people want the right to live, work and play in their own communities. I hope that's what *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* will show. I hope this film will help breakdown barriers to full participation. We want every building, bus, plane and transportation vehicle accessible for all people.

*Simone: Alice, what about Diana and Kathy's story did you find compelling?*

Alice: The way Diana and Kathy go after something they want motivates me to do the same. The fact that they journeyed to Washington DC and spoke up for their rights, made me committed to telling their story in the most honest way I could. After they asked me to make a documentary about them, they got into my brain and my heart; they changed my life.

*Simone: Where are you headed with the film?*

Alice: We plan to screen it before Congress in 2008 and to go to states where there is a chance to influence legislation and change policy. There are disability awareness and history of disability rights curricula being written, and we are hoping to make *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy* a part of that national curriculum. Their lives span the Disability Rights movement from living in institutions to living independently. For us, this is part of a multi-year public outreach and advocacy plan.

*Simone: Were there challenges with the making of Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy?*

Alice: I was concerned about Kathy's health, and never knew how she would feel when I arrived to tape. Sometimes we would all go off to the hospital together. However, I did not want the film to be just about illness, because Diana and Kathy have so much more going on in their lives. The filmmaking process includes a time of focusing on the question, "What is the story?" Along with their activism, we wanted to include the story of a large Illinois institution for people with developmental disabilities that was trying to reorganize. We also pursued Diana's search for her mother, which was a storyline that brought her childhood to closure. Diana, Kathy and I became close because of all the things we've been through over the five years that we filmed.

*Simone: How did you become involved in making films about people with disabilities?*

Alice: My first film, *The Collector of Bedford Street*, was about my neighbor, Larry Selman who has an intellectual disability. When I started that project, I began to learn about the challenges he faces. I also discovered that there were hundreds of people who were interested in his story. A community of self-advocates, caregivers, administrators and individuals have embraced my work. Sustaining these relationships brings me new projects.

*Simone: What's next on the horizon for you?*

Alice: I'm making a film about a couple with Down's syndrome called *2 Weddings and a Future*. One family is Christian, the other Hindu. He's a musician and she's a teacher's aide. When the couple got married they were optimistic about how their worlds would blend; now they're working out the details of independent living and self-determination.

*Simone: What drives you as a filmmaker?*

Alice: I'm creating change in the world by telling stories that might not otherwise get told. I like being an artist and an activist. Exploring the ability to use art for change gives me a purpose to get up every morning. How many people can say that? ■ ABILITY

Body and Soul: Diana and Kathy

[Reviewed by Lori Widzinski, Health Sciences Library, University at Buffalo, State University of New York](#)

 Highly Recommended

Date Entered: 3/26/2008

At first glance, *Body and Soul: Diana and Kathy* seems like any other well made documentary about the courageous lives of two disabled women in a unique situation. Kathy has severe cerebral palsy and her caretaker of 38 years, Diana, has Down Syndrome. As their individual stories unfold, filmmaker Alice Elliott seamlessly morphs a typical inspirational piece into the quintessential disability rights film.

As we get to know Kathy and Diana, how they met, their family backgrounds and growing up in an America even less attuned to the disabled than we are today, we soon see how they complement each other. Like anyone else, they have experienced life's joys, traumas, and excitements, both because of and in spite of their disabilities. Kathy's intellect and emotional presence enmesh with Diana's physical abilities, each strengthening the other's weaker areas to create a team that allows them to not only survive, put thrive independently. Their situation beautifully illustrates the importance of independent living for the disabled. Their ability and fierce desire to remain in their own home is palpable as they fight to keep state institutions for the disabled closed in Illinois. The interplay between them is astonishing, and at the same time completely understandable. Disability rights activists for over 35 years; these two extraordinary women truly are, as Diana says at the end of the film, body and soul for each other.

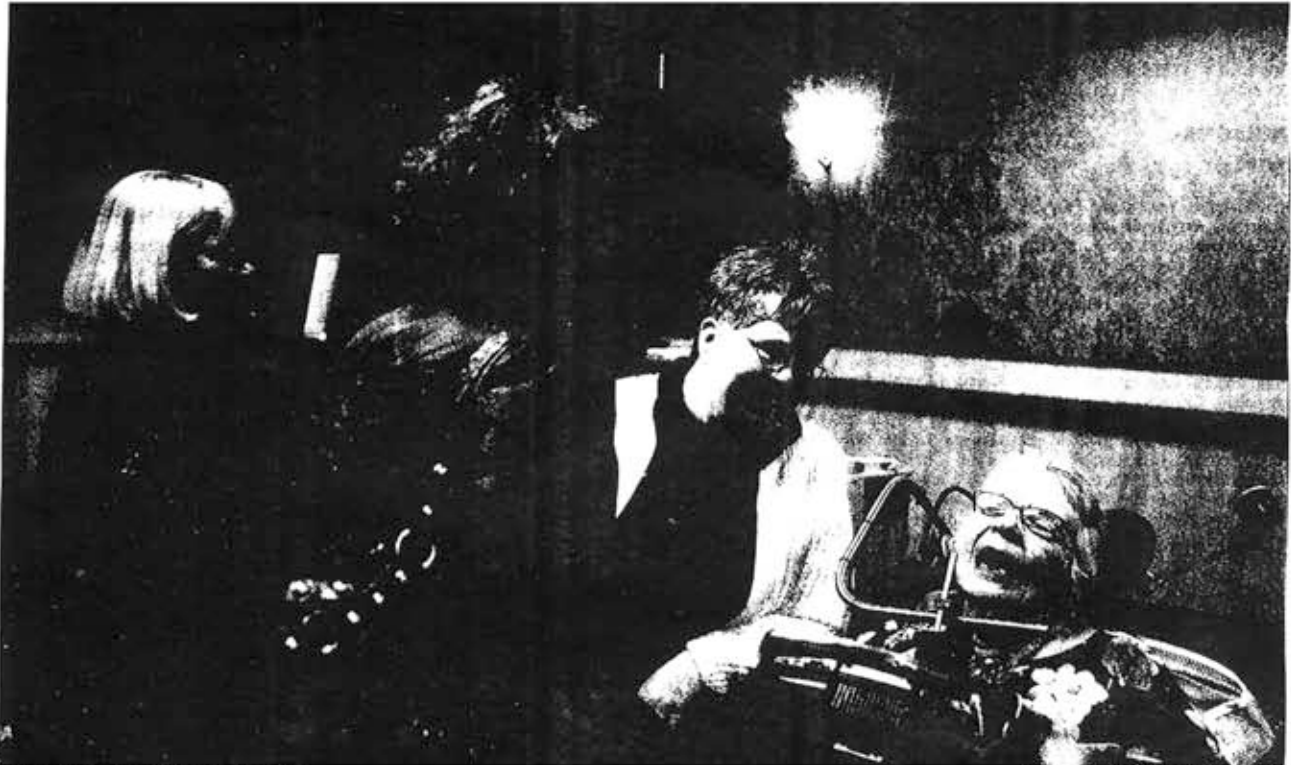
One of the hallmarks of a fine piece of art, no matter the medium, is that it makes you think about it long after the initial contact. Elliott does just that in this film, brilliantly chronicling the perfect duo to champion this cause, resulting in an inspiring, humbling, and educational film. She accomplishes what good documentary filmmaking should—an emotional bond with the subjects and a desire to help their cause. While it will find a place in academic library collections supporting disability studies and rehabilitation, social work, and related health sciences fields, most everyone will benefit from viewing [Body and Soul: Diana and Kathy](#). **Highly recommended.**

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# CITY/STATE

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Max Bittle/The State Journal-Register

From left: Vicki Kamhi, Beth Antonacci, Diana Braun and Kathy Conour talk after a screening of "Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy" on Saturday at the Hilton Springfield.

## 'Diana & Kathy' documentary comes home

*Film about two disabled women who share Springfield home shown locally*

By **AMANDA REAVY**  
STAFF WRITER

Each morning, Diana Braun greets her dear friend and roommate Kathy Conour, hoists her out of bed and places her in her wheelchair inside the Springfield home they share.

"Good morning, Ding Dong," Kathy, whose cerebral palsy severely limits her movement and verbal communication, types to Diana using a sip-and-puff device that's mounted on her wheelchair.

More often than not, Kathy doesn't need to type. Diana, who has Down syndrome, already knows what she's going to say

Such intimacy is the result of 40 years of living together and fusing their individual abilities to live and thrive independently together. Their relationship has sustained both women through all of life's challenges — injuries, financial troubles, loss of parents — as well as triumphs in their advocacy for the disabled.

It's a collaboration that New York City's Alice Elliott chronicles in her documentary "Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy." The 40-minute film was shown for the first time in Springfield during two separate viewings Saturday at the Hilton Springfield.

About 75 people attended the 3 p.m. showing while roughly 30 came at 6 p.m.

Proceeds from the event were split between Sparc, United Cerebral Palsy Land of Lincoln and the Springfield Center for Independent Living.

Elliott, Diana and Kathy also were on hand to answer questions.

Ann Ford, who's known Kathy and Diana "for years and years and years," was among those who watched the film for the first time.

"It shows Kathy and Diana in everyday life, and I think very often the general public does not think about us in that way."

See **DOCUMENTARY** on page 20

### DOCUMENTARY

■ From page 17

They don't stop to think that we have homes, that we have bills to pay and that we have sometimes trouble balancing our checkbook ...," said Ford, who also is disabled. "I think that's part of what is going to help tear down some of the barriers that exist to help people who don't know anything about disability to understand why we don't want institutions."

Elliott said she sees Kathy and Diana's journey as one filled with lessons for everyone.

"These are two interesting and intrepid women who exercised their rights and who have tremendous obstacles and have overcome them," she said.

Kathy and Diana enjoyed sharing the movie with those in their home-

town, some of whom make appearances in the film.

Diana said the pair has been busy traveling to promote the film, which is being shown at festivals across the country to qualify for Academy Award consideration in the short documentary category. They also plan to travel to Seattle to receive an award for the film from The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, an international association of people with disabilities, in early December.

The film also has been nominated for the 2007 International Documentary Association's Distinguished Documentary Achievement Award.

The feedback has been above anyone's expectations.

"What I like to do is I don't set out to tell people what to think. I want them to go home and think about it," Elliott said. "This is a really good story, it's not just a disability story."

From *The Catalyst* Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois, Dec 2007 - Jan 2008

## **Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy**

by CCDI PR and Marketing Coordinator Jessica Hayes

I attended my very first CCDI Conference in 1998. I didn't work for the Coalition yet - in fact I had just been hired by the newly opened Jacksonville Area Center for Independent Living. I have had a disability my entire life, but I was new to the world of disability rights advocacy, and was sorely in need of training. It was at this conference, in the ballroom of the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield, IL, that I first laid eyes on Diana Braun and Kathy Conour. My memory of Kathy is particularly vivid. She has CP and uses a power wheelchair with lots of assistive technology attached in various locations. On the back of her chair was a bumper sticker that read "Pat my head and I'll bite your hand!" At that moment in time a switch was flipped on in my head as I said to myself, 'Oh, that's what a disability rights advocate is.'

There are few among us who are capable of making that kind of an impact by just being themselves. It is this special gift that prompted filmmaker Alice Elliott to begin filming Diana and Kathy.

The story of Diana and Kathy's life is an extraordinary one. Long before civil rights laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the pair was forging ahead into unexplored territory as they fought to live independent lives.

At the age eight, Diana Braun was removed from an abusive family situation and sent to live at a state operated nursing home. At 12, she moved to Dixon Developmental Center where she lived until she was 19. As an adult with Down Syndrome, Diana vowed to one day close state run institutions. In her own words, "Institutions are not a safe place to be."

Kathy Conour's upbringing was radically different from Diana's. She was raised the only child of a loving, if not overprotective, family from Springfield, IL. She attended high school in Chicago and went on to obtain a bachelors degree in Social Work from Olivet Nazarene College with a minor in Business Administration. It was at Kathy's first job in 1970 at a sheltered workshop in Ottawa, IL that she met Diana. The rest as they say is history, and the world is fortunate that Alice Elliott recorded a piece of that history.

Elliott first met Diana and Kathy in 2002 at a national ARC convention held in Columbus, Ohio, after a screening of Elliott's Academy Award nominated documentary *The Collector of Bedford Street*. Kathy had been thinking about the idea of a documentary for years and says that when she saw *The Collector of Bedford Street*, she knew Elliott was the one.

"We waited outside after the movie for two hours," said Diana of their first meeting with Elliott.

While Kathy was convinced she and Diana would be the subject of Elliott's next film, it took some work to convince Elliott. Although flattered by their praise and enthusiasm for her work,

Elliott at first said she wasn't interested in filming the pair. She had no idea how persistent, and persuasive Kathy could be.

After many e-mails and phone calls, Elliott finally agreed to travel to Springfield and film Diana and Kathy for a week. She thought the two would realize what an intrusion the documentary would be, but the experience only got them more excited.

"It was like having another roommate," said Diana.

After the first trip to Springfield, Elliott was convinced too. She says it was, "when I looked at the footage after I got home and found them both funny and compelling," that she totally embraced the idea. And so five-years of filming *Body and Soul* began.

Completed in 2007, *Body and Soul* has premiered in both Chicago and Springfield. In addition, Kathy and Diana have been making the rounds to conferences and meetings across the country where the film has been featured. Praise for *Body and Soul* has been overwhelming. Only after a few months of limited showings, Diana and Kathy have become superstars in the disability community as well as the recipients of a number of awards.

So what makes *Body and Soul* such a compelling film? The answer seems to be twofold. First there is the subject matter. Diana and Kathy are both surprisingly ordinary and extraordinary at the same time. Diana drives their lift equipped van and performs personal care duties for Kathy, and through the use of her Pathfinder communication device Kathy writes elegant words spoken electronically. The two also own their own home in a nice upper-middleclass Springfield neighborhood. They are tireless advocates who have traveled as far as Washington DC to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.

Secondly is Elliott's self proclaimed "edgy" style of filmmaking. Kathy and Diana's unique 37-year relationship is captured in a manor that endures the viewer, but never crosses the line into sentimentality. Elliott holds her subjects in high esteem, and viewers leave feeling the same. There is absolutely no room for pity in Elliott's camera lens. Instead she fills it with respect and integrity.



Photos courtesy of Welcome Change Productions

Diana Braun has cerebral palsy. Her friend and caregiver, Kathy Conour, has Down syndrome. They have been a team for more than 35 years. They are the stars of filmmaker Alice Elliott's documentary "Body and Soul: Diana and Kathy," showing this week at the Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville.



Welcome Change Productions

Kathy Conour, left, and Diana Braun traveled from their home in the Midwest to the nation's capital to appeal for more generous funding for people with disabilities.

## 'Diana & Kathy': Profiles in courage

Brought together by disability, two friends appeal to lawmakers to improve the lives of others

Kevin Canfield  
The Journal News

It's unlikely that any movie released this year will feature characters more remarkable than Kathy Conour and Diana Braun.

The subjects of a moving new documentary from director Alice Elliott, the unlikely cinematic heroes are waging a war for their lives — and the lives of many others.

"Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy" plays tomorrow and Thursday at the Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville. Elliott will be on hand for a question-and-answer session after both of the 5 p.m. screenings.

An engrossing 40 minutes, "Body & Soul" tells the story of Diana, who has cerebral palsy, and her friend and caregiver, Kathy, who has Down syndrome. The two have been a team for more than 35 years, but huge medical bills and difficulties posed by complicated Medicare procedures and standards have propelled the women into crisis.



Diana Braun, left, and Kathy Conour confront life together.

## Diana & Kathy go to Washington

DOCUMENTARY, from 1D

Elliott said the women's bravery — they traveled from their home in the Midwest to the nation's capital to appeal for more generous funding for people with challenges such as theirs — is inspiring.

"I have all my facilities right now; some people like to say I'm a T.A.B. — I'm temporarily able-bodied. But I don't go to Washington about things that I'm passionate about," Elliott said. "And here are two women, it was a huge obstacle for them to go and participate and they went and did it." The film, which went into production in 2002, captures private moments that are alternately poignant and funny. Confronting everyday life with guts, the women make time to gently joke and tease — they call one another "ding-dong."

"They're just kind of blunt and straight-forward," Elliott said. "What really appealed to me was their humor — that they were not only good subjects and had a great

story, but they had a lot of humor. I always like that because I feel like people forget that that's part of the human condition."

In 2002, Elliott had recently finished "The Collector of Bedford Street," a documentary that would be nominated for an Oscar, and wasn't sure she was ready to take

on another exhaustive project. But the more time she spent with Conour and Braun at their home in Illinois, the more she was convinced that she had another story.

"My films choose me, they're stories that keep me awake at night, and that I can't turn away from," Elliott said.

If all goes well, the movie's small theatrical opening will put it in line for Academy Award contention. The film has already played in Florida and Illinois, and will soon show elsewhere in New York and in California.

The film lands at the Burns in part through the friendship Elliott and Brian Ackerman, the center's programming director, forged

through several visits to the annual Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in North Carolina.

"She's an incredibly committed filmmaker," Ackerman said. "I think she's somebody who is so clearly in it for all the right reasons."

Simone Pero Audi, the film's co-producer and the founder of Impact Productions of Bronxville, said she thinks the movie is significant because it deals with a subject that is of vital interest to many people.

"For me, this was a story about two extraordinarily strong women leaders who delved into an important public-policy issue and were not afraid to share their own life experiences to make positive impacts on the lives of others," she said in an e-mail.

Elliott said the film has a couple of central themes.

First, she said, it urges the viewer to "get involved, be committed and go to your elected representatives and let them know what you want."

Also, it encourages the audience to refrain from hasty assessments of others. As Elliott said, "Don't judge people by what you think you know about them."

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**My films choose me, they're stories that keep me awake at night, and that I can't turn away from. That's what happened with these two women.**

Alice Elliott, director

## Champions for people with disabilities

By WENDY DAVIS, Reporter

The Watseka Public Library welcomed Diana Braun and Kathy Conour, who gave a viewing of their film "Body and Soul: Diana and Kathy".

Braun and Conour work hard fighting for the rights of disabled people to keep independent lives.

In 2002 they fought to have a documentary film about them, Conour said.

"We stood outside for two hours waiting for Alice Elliott (the director of the film) to ask her to make a film. She said no but we kept emailing her," said Conour, originally from Springfield. "She filmed us for five years."

"We always wanted to do a movie," said Braun, originally from Freeport.

This determination is an example of how the women live their lives and fight for what they believe.

The women met 37 years ago and developed a close relationship where Braun, who has Down Syndrome, and Conour, who has Cerebral Palsy, depend upon each other to live out of a nursing home or state run institution.

Sally Newberry, Danforth, said she first met the women in Kankakee where they were denied an apartment to rent.

"They needed the apartment. They thought it was perfect because of its location, but the guy didn't want to rent it to someone with disabilities," Newberry said. So they set up a sting for the landlord to find out it truly was available.

"We told him he had broken the law and he agreed to rent it to them," she said. "They ended up having a good relationship with him."

"In 1980 Kathy came down and worked at the Arc and Diana volunteered at the Welles Shop," she said.

"Since meeting they have become wonderful advocates," said Lou Ellen Strong, with the Arc.

The film shows how the women achieve their day to day lives and documents their struggles as well.

In the film it shows Conour in her recovery after breaking her hip getting on a train.

Also, the viewer watches the effects Braun's abusive mother have had on her. Finally, when the women are confronted as being too independent for Medicare they take their fight to Illinois state senators and representatives.

Braun said they have been to the White House and have plans to visit every state to show their film.

She said she thinks the 40-minute film may be shown on PBS or WE sometime, but it can be pre-ordered by contacting Strong through the Arc.

## ***Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy Screenings List:***

### **Conferences:**

1. 2008 NYC Direct Support Professionals Nov 13 New York, NY
2. 2008 Self Advocates of NY Oct 30-Nov 1 Albany, NY
3. 2008 Arc of Minnesota October 10-11 Mankato, MN
4. 2008 NACDD October 6-8 Milwaukee, WI
5. 2008 New Hope Community Training September 23 Loch Sheldrake, NY
6. 2008 Golden Gate Self Advocacy September 16 San Francisco, CA
7. 2008 NAPSA Annual Conference August 26-29 Chicago, IL
8. 2008 Mirage Conference June 27 Allegheny, PA
9. 2008 Society for Disability Studies June 18-21 New York, NY
10. 2008 Assistive Technology Partners June 12-14 Denver, CO
11. 2008 Empowerment Day 2008 May 5 Bethlehem, PA
12. 2008 Arc of Illinois Annual Convention May 1 Lisle, IL
13. 2008 CCDI (Justin Dart Award) April 28 Springfield, IL
14. 2008 NYSACRA April 18 Sagamore, NY
15. 2008 Arc of Massachusetts May 3 Boston, MA
16. 2008 Disability Policy Seminar March 2-4 Washington DC
17. 2008 Rehab Seminars AAC Conference Jan 31 – Feb 1 Shoreline, WA
18. 2007 TASH Conference December 6-8 Seattle, WA
19. 2007 Louisiana Disability Summit October 24-26 Alexandria, LA
20. 2007 AAIDD Creative Works October 15 -16 Portland, ME
21. 2007 ICDD Speak Up & Speak Out October 1 Springfield, IL
22. 2007 Building Bridges September 25-26 Grantville, PA
23. 2007 AAIDD Region IX September 6-7 Pittsburgh, PA
24. 2007 Pittsburgh Employment Conference August 3-5 Pittsburgh, PA
25. 2007 Alliance Annual Summit June 20-22 Vail, CO
26. 2007 MSC Conference May 30 New York, NY
27. 2007 AAIDD 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting May 21-24 Atlanta, GA

28. 2006	Coleman Institute Conference	Oct 24	Boulder, CO
29. 2006	CCAC	Sept 29	Monroeville, PA

**Film Festivals:**

1. 2009	"The Way We Live"	November 3-7	Munich , Germany
2. 2009	Sprout Film Festival		New York, NY
3. 2009	Talking Pictures Film Festival	May 2	Evanston, IL
4. 2009	Picture This...	May 28-29	Alberta, Canada
5. 2009	Sebastopol Film Festival	March 6-8	Sebastopol, CA
6. 2008	Focus Film Festival	October 22	Chico, CA
7. 2008	NY DisABILITIES Festival	October 18	Buffalo, NY
8. 2008	Abilities Arts Festival	October 4	Toronto, Canada
9. 2008	Sun Valley Spiritual	Sept. 19-21	Hailey, ID
10. 2008	Superfest XXVIII	June 20-22	Berkeley, CA
11. 2008	Mendocino	May 29-June 1	Mendocino, CA
12. 2008	Atlanta International	April 10-19	Atlanta, GA
13. 2008	Full Frame	April 3-6	Durham, NC
14. 2008	Western Psychological Association	April 10-13	Irvine, CA
15. 2008	Brattleboro Women's	March 14-23	Brattleboro, VT
16. 2008	Cleveland International	March 6-16	Cleveland, OH
17. 2008	Nazariya Women's Festival	March 5-8	Natarani, India
18. 2008	Big Sky Documentary	February 14-20	Missoula, MO
19. 2008	Santa Barbara International	Jan 24 – Feb 3	Santa Barbara, CA
20. 2008	Palm Springs International	January 3-14	Palm Springs, CA
21. 2007	Rocky Mountain Womens	November 2-4	Colorado Springs, CO
22. 2007	Hot Springs Documentary	October 19-28	Hot Springs, AR
23. 2007	Heartland Truly Moving Pictures	October 18-26	Indianapolis, IN
24. 2007	Mill Valley Film Festival	October 4-14	Mill Valley, CA

## Screenings:

1.	2009	Arc of North Carolina	September 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Charlotte, NC
2.	2009	Annual Assistive Technology Expo	April 30 <sup>th</sup>	Fargo, ND
3.	2008	ICDD Presents: 35 Years	November 19	Springfield, IL
4.	2008	Westchester Disability Partnership	November 3	White Plains, NY
5.	2008	Webster University Film Series	September 27	ST. Louis, MO
6.	2008	Screening Disability (NYU)	September 12	New York, NY
7.	2008	Nat. Assoc. for Down Syndrome	May 20	Park Ridge, IL
8.	2008	ICDD Diversity Committee	May 16	Springfield, IL
9.	2008	Arc of Orange County	April 2	Chapel Hill, NC
10.	2008	Cinema Society of San Diego	January 22	San Diego, CA
11.	2008	Arc of San Diego	January 22	San Diego, CA
12.	2007	IDA Awards	December 7	Los Angeles, CA
13.	2007	Victory Gardens Theatre	November 18	Chicago, IL
14.	2007	Springfield Benefit	November 17	Springfield, IL
15.	2007	Watseka Public Library	November 8	Watseka, IL
16.	2007	Fountain Valley School	November 5	Fountain Valley, CA
17.	2007	Cerebral Palsy of New York State	October 23	Albany, NY
18.	2007	Council for the Study of Disability	October 18	New York City, NY
19.	2007	IARF Screening	September 27	Springfield, IL
20.	2007	Spectrum 8 Theatre	August 29-30	Albany, NY
21.	2007	The Little Theatre	August 20-21	Rochester, NY
22.	2007	Jacob Burns Film Center	August 15-16	Pleasantville, NY
23.	2007	Gene Siskel Film Center	August 4-5	Chicago, IL
24.	2007	Enzian Theater	July 21-22	Maitland, FL

## Marketing Conventions

1. Aim High
2. National Media Market

## **Awards**

1. AAIDD Media Award (2007)
2. Henry Hampton Award for Excellence in Film & Digital Media (2008, awarded by the Council on Foundations)
3. TASH Positive Images in Media Award (2007, shared with Including Samuel)
4. Best of Festival Award (2008 Superfest XXVIII)
5. Crystal Heart Award (2007 Heartland Film Festival)
6. NAFDMA Insight Award (2007 Award for Excellence, Short Film Documentary)
7. CCDI Justin Dart Distinguished Citizens of the Year Award (2008 recipients: Diana Braun & Kathy Conour)
8. NYSACRA Excellence Award (2008 recipient: Alice Elliott)
9. Honorable Mention, Documentary Over 30 Minutes (2009 Picture This ... Film Festival)
10. Best Documentary (2009 Talking Pictures Film Festival)

## **Nominations:**

1. IDA Short Documentary Award (2007)
2. American Library Association's Notable Videos for Adults