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[Gordonsville, VA](#) 79° Feels Like: 79° Mostly Cloudy

Society is good for friendship

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Juan Mandelbaum and Richard Herskowitz have been friends for years.

A filmmaker and his friend, who has directed the Virginia Film Festival for the past 15 years.

Mandelbaum, who owns his own production company in Boston, said he was thrilled to be coming to Charlottesville next week.

His documentary, “Our Disappeared,” will be shown at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Vinegar Hill Theater as part of Herskowitz’s Virginia Film Society series.

It’s Mandelbaum’s first Charlottesville screening. It will be Herskowitz’s last, before he leaves to launch a new cinema and media arts festival in Houston.

“We have been friends for so long,” Mandelbaum said. “I am very happy to be there for this special occasion.”

It seems Hershowitz may have saved one of the best for last.

Not only is “Our Disappeared” an award-winning documentary, Herskowitz said it has “a fascinating Charlottesville connection.”

Mandelbaum, the son of German immigrants who fled Germany during World War II, was raised in Buenos Aires. About four years ago, the filmmaker thought of Patricia Dixon, his old girlfriend back in Argentina. When he tried to find her on a Google search, he discovered that her name was among the

thousands on a list of Argentina's "disappeared." A dozen other friends were also among those who were kidnapped, tortured and killed by the right-wing military junta that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983.

With camera in hand, Mandelbaum made six trips to Argentina to try to document what happened to his friends.

After two years of editing, he had "Our Disappeared," which included footage of Ines Kuperschmidt.

"Her mother was one of the disappeared," Mandelbaum said. "Her mother was a friend of mine."

Kuperschmidt is the director of legal services for the Learning Rights Law Center in Los Angeles, but she has some very strong ties on this side of the country.

"Ines is a UVa alum," Mandelbaum said. "She met her husband at UVa, too."

"She is one of the children of the 'disappeared' that I interview," Mandelbaum said. "She had a diary that her mother had written the year she was born. She was in her dorm room at UVa when she saw the diary for the first time."

Apparently her parents were both members of the radical left-wing Montoneros, who opposed the new regime.

Her mom spotted some government officials when she had taken young Ines to the zoo in the mid-1970s. To save her daughter, she left Ines lying on the grass and marched up to the officials. The child was later found by an elderly couple and adopted by an aunt.

Her story is one of many in Mandelbaum's new film.

"She is a very strong presence in the film," the director said. "And she still has many friends in the area."

Mandelbaum, soon, will be here too, to visit his good friend ... and maybe, just maybe meet a few more.

The film will be shown at 7 p.m. with a discussion to follow in Vinegar Hill. The cost is \$9, free for member of the Virginia Film Society. For details, check out www.vafilm.com

