

## Uplifting Films for Families: Watch From Home

By Gemma Alexander |

If your family is anything like mine, you ran out of stuff to watch on Netflix months ago. So, if you're on the lookout for something new and different to watch with the kids, you're in luck. [Northwest Film Forum](#) comes through for us this February with its annual — and always excellent — [Children's Film Festival Seattle](#).

New this year, the 16th annual film fest will be held entirely online, running Feb. 18–28. Families can watch from the comfort of their own couches anywhere in the United States. Another bonus: Families can watch on their own schedule vs. viewing films and shorts programs at specific times.

### Uplifting theme

The Children's Film Festival Seattle sometimes presents movies that challenge viewers' ideas of what is kid-friendly. This year, with families facing many difficulties brought about by the pandemic, the festival's theme is "Love & Light." Without shying away from serious topics entirely, the festival is taking particular care to showcase feature-length movies and short films that uplift the spirit.



Short film "Little Grey Wolfy: Fall Travelers," part of the Kaleidoscope shorts program for ages 3–6.

### International roster of movies

The selection is slightly smaller than in past years, but at 133 films representing 36 countries, there's still a huge array to choose from. More important than the numbers is the tight focus on the "Love & Light" theme.

"This year we want to bring great energy into people's homes," says Liz Shephard, youth programs director for Northwest Film Forum. "These films show children being strong and having agency to make choices that help the adults in their lives and their siblings."



"Sisters: The Summer We Found Our Superpowers," one of the feature films in this year's fest

### Feature-length films

There are four feature films available to watch during the festival, all recommended for ages 9 and older. Three of them are subtitled in English with dialogue in a different language. Despite some hair-raising situations, all four promise a happy ending — usually brought about through the courage and cleverness of kid protagonists.

The English film "[Louisa: An Amazing Adventure](#)" tells the true story of a daring lifeboat rescue mission. This film is in 3-D animation.

"[Sisters: The Summer We Found Our Superpowers](#)" is a subtitled live-action Norwegian film about a pair of sisters who must rescue their father when he becomes injured during a hike.

"[Triple Trouble](#)" is a subtitled Polish heist movie that pits teens against an art thief.

The film "[Young Warriors](#)" comes from Brazil, with subtitles, and provides a classic family road trip that we can only experience vicariously these days.

### Film shorts

Collections of short films are the highlight of the festival for many families. Short films, both live-action and animated, range in length from just two minutes up to roughly 20 minutes. Collections are groupings of some five to 10 short films for a total running time of about an hour to an hour and 15 minutes.



Short film "Vanille," included in the French-language shorts collection called "Petits Trésors"

In this year's festival, 16 different short-film programs focus on comfort, reassurance and affirmation. Program blocks are sorted by age, sometimes by language

(there are German-, Spanish- and French-language programs) and by topic.

Topical programs include a [Promise to the Planet](#) featuring short films about the environment. Collections titled [Journeys, Genders and Identity](#) and [Friends and Fam](#) both deal with themes of belonging.

The Children's Film Festival Seattle has always been about empowering kids, and that mission is even more critical this year when so much feels out of their control. Programs titled [Making My Way](#), [Indomitable](#), [I Am Strong](#) and [Youth Shine](#) all share stories of capable and resilient young people accomplishing great things.

It's easy to browse the [CFFS website](#) to find a shorts program (or three!) that's right for your family.

### How to watch

Although the shared experience of watching a movie in a theater is lost, and you'll have to make your own popcorn, the virtual festival format offers a significant advantage in convenience. Families don't have to navigate public transportation or Capitol Hill parking to access the festival. Every feature film and short film block will be available on demand throughout the 10-day festival, so families can watch what they want when they want. Make it movie night every night of the run.

### Active screen time

There are a few different opportunities for kids to take a more active role in the festival. Free virtual workshops (registration required) will be offered during the weekends of the festival.

- [Stop Motion Animation: Playing With Food](#), Saturday, Feb. 20 (for ages 8–12)
- [Storytelling for Filmmakers](#), Saturday, Feb. 27 (for ages 10–14)

A collaborative film made by kids ages 7 and older during workshops earlier this month will screen on Sunday, Feb. 21, followed by a group discussion. The shorts block [Radolescents](#) showcases films made by kids, many of them during virtual film camps hosted by Northwest Film Forum during the past year.

Official festival winners will be chosen by youth juries made up of kids ages 8–15 who watch and rate a selection of films. Check the website for opportunities for kids to sit on a jury next time around.