

Family's dedication to 'Eggshelland' display is focus of documentary

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Some families bond over baseball or birding. For the Manolio family, the glue that keeps them together is Easter eggs.

Each year since the 1950s, the family has turned thousands of eggs into breathtaking lawn mosaics that have enchanted generations since the 1950s.

Filmmaker and former Cleve-

lander Christopher Noice reveals how the yearly feat happens in "Eggshelland," a locally produced documentary playing Friday and Saturday at the Cedar Lee Theatre in Cleveland Heights.

Noice, 48, made his first visit to Eggshelland in 1985, after he moved here from his native Lancaster.

"I was totally speechless — a mixture of wonder and confusion," Noice recalled.

Noice thought it would make a good documentary, but he put the idea aside for years. He fronted the local band the Silence and worked with Sagamore Hills filmmaker Julie Matthews on an unproduced script.

One morning in 2003, Matthews called him, ordered him out of bed and said, "Let's do this movie." Noice and Matthews decided to follow Ron and Betty

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Manolio as they planned the following year's Easter display. Betty Manolio, mindful of what will delight kids, picks a theme and makes colored drawings on graph paper. Ron Manolio hand-paints the eggs, and the entire family lugs boxes of eggs and pounds rows of pegs into the ground.

"It was beyond inspiring," Noice said about the Manolios' dedication and energy. "It made me do some soul-searching."

Thanks to home movies, "Eggshelland" explores the beginnings of the tradition back in 1957, when Ron Manolio's mother made a cross on her lawn with 750 dyed eggs.

As soon as he'd finished collecting footage, Noice left Garfield Heights for Berkeley, Calif., and a

job making educational films. He is back in town this week for the screenings.

Matthews, the film's associate producer, sees it as a tribute to marriage, love and creative obsession.

"It's more than a movie about eggs on a lawn," Matthews said.

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