

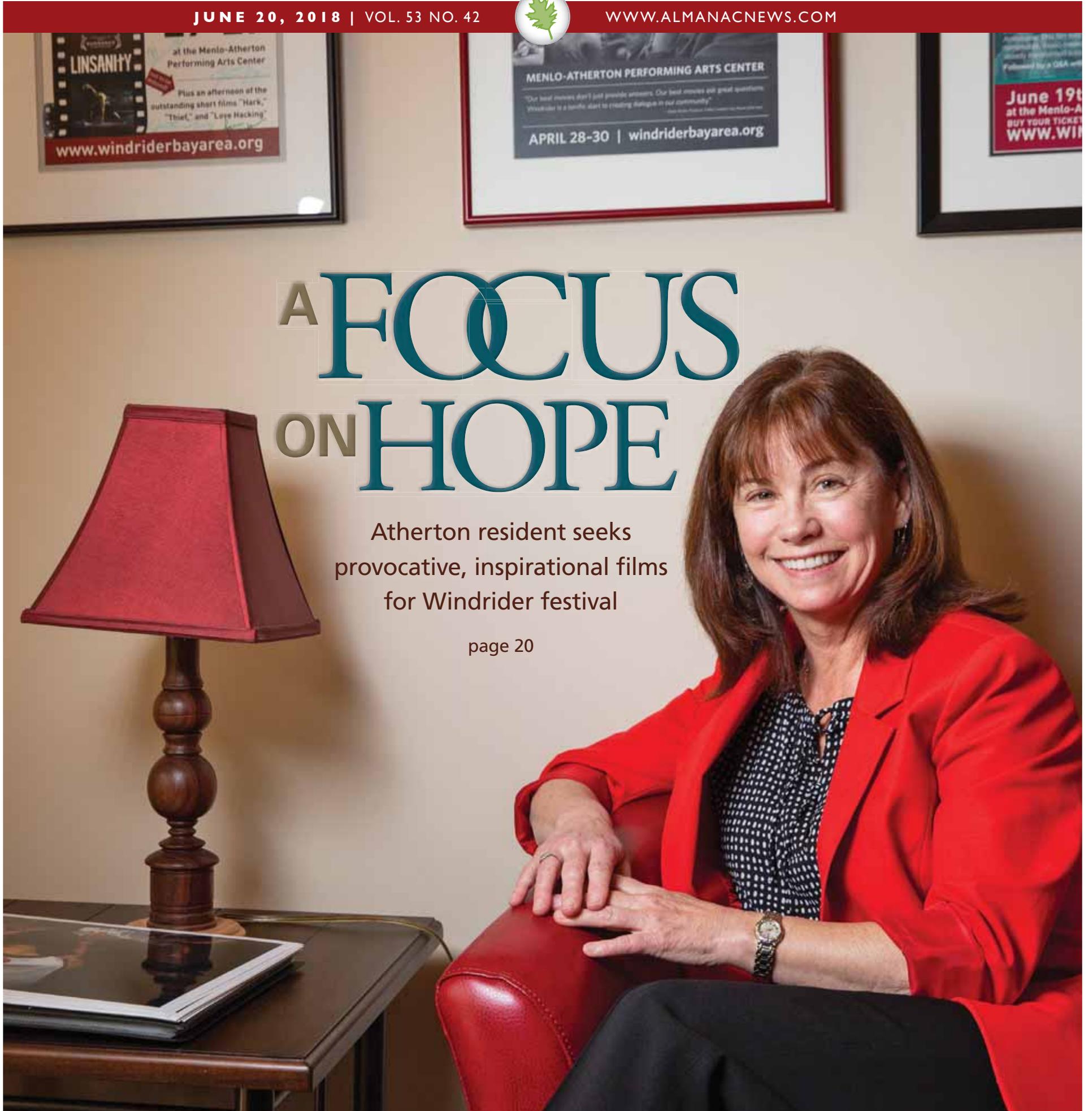
The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

JUNE 20, 2018 | VOL. 53 NO. 42



WWW.ALMANACNEWS.COM



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A FOCUS ON HOPE

Atherton resident seeks provocative, inspirational films for Windrider festival

By **Kate Daly** Special to the Almanac

Photos by **Natalia Nazarova**

Movies that move. That's basically what Terri Bullock is seeking when she travels all over the country to sit down in darkened theaters and spend hours upon hours watching — appealing films that will entertain and provoke positive thoughts in a growing audience back home.

For nine years, the Atherton resident has directed Windrider Film Forum Bay Area, three days of show and tell that's billed as: "Independent films. Compelling conversations. Unexpected journeys."

Once again the event is taking place at the Menlo-Atherton Performing Arts Center, with different films showing each night at 7 p.m. on June 28, 29 and 30.

The former licensed financial planner and investment adviser now finds herself working the film festival circuit with colleagues to curate a collection of award-winning selections with a slant.

"We're looking for something, big important issues ... through what I call the lens of hope," she said in a recent interview with *The Almanac*.

Last January the search took her to the Sundance Film Festival in Utah, where she screened 17 films in a week, observed the audiences' reactions, and then interactions during the question-and-answer periods with filmmakers and stars after the showings.

That festival is where she scouted out the film that will close Windrider Film Forum Bay Area on Saturday, June 30. "Inventing Tomorrow" is a documentary about high school students from 75 countries competing in a science fair.

The film profiles two Mexican boys who invented a paint that absorbs air pollution, and a soon-to-be Stanford student who studied a contaminated water source in India. Windrider Bay Area is paying for them and director Laura Nix to travel here and speak at the end of the showing. The nonprofit also covers food expenses, but usually places the guests in private homes for the long weekend.

Windrider Bay Area will open Thursday, June 28, with "Skid Row Marathon," this year's winner of the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Palm Springs International Film Festival.

"It's about the homeless, drug addiction, unwed mothers, ex-incarcerated, and living on Skid Row," Bullock explained.

In the film, a criminal court judge starts a running club with a group of down-and-out people living in Los Angeles. He agrees to train them to run marathons internationally if they promise to stay clean, sober, and crime-free.

"The transformation is amazing" once dignity is restored and runners start rebuilding their lives, Bullock said.

The inspirational storyline is one reason she chose the film. She wants to build on that message when filmmakers, the judge and a runner take



Terri Bullock manages the Windrider Film Forum Bay Area program from her home office in Atherton.

the stage after the showing, and then again when the audience spills out into the lobby.

At the end of the evening representatives from various nonprofits such as Habitat for Humanity and Children and Family Services will be on hand to educate people on what local help is available to those struggling with similar issues.

Bullock said that when she is shopping for films her "filter is more humanitarian."

She described the demographics of her audience as "pretty mixed — a population that is really intelligent, very educated, cares about things, and is willing to have a conversation, discourse about things."

"It's so wonderful to be part of this when so much of the country is so polarized," she added.

Bullock went to the University of the Pacific before earning an MBA from UCLA's Anderson School of Management, where she still volunteers. She is also involved in the Parents of Alumni Committee at Menlo School, sponsors Music@Menlo, and has served on the board of the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation.

Before Windrider, she worked for

Wells Fargo and Chase Manhattan banks, and The Savant Investment Group. She currently serves on the advisory board for Savant and the Brehm Center for the Arts at Fuller Theological Seminary.

The Bay Area film forum she directs is part of Windrider Institute, a nonprofit based in Idaho that was co-founded by brothers Ed and John Priddy, both entrepreneurs and film producers.

In 2004 they aligned with Will Stoller-Lee, director of Fuller Theological Seminary's Colorado campus, and launched the Windrider Forum at Sundance. That forum provides workshops for about 150 film and seminary students from a dozen different places so they can mingle with filmmakers attending the larger festival.

Bullock first got involved with the annual film project when a friend invited her to attend the Windrider

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— TERRI BULLOCK —

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This poster highlights the films in this year's Windrider film festival at Menlo-Atherton Performing Arts Center.

Forum at Sundance. Afterwards, her friend wanted to start up a program in the Bay Area, but got sick, and Bullock ended up co-chairing the event. She jokingly refers to Windrider as her "accidental career."

Now as sole director, Bullock manages the program out of her home office, maintaining a stash of Windrider posters, T-shirts, water bottles and tote bags down in her basement. She relies on a team of mostly volunteers that includes her daughter Christina in marketing. Her daughter-in-law was involved as well up until a few weeks ago, when she gave birth to the first grandchild in the family.

Bullock's work overlaps with her personal life in other ways as well. She found herself particularly affected by one film, "Alive Inside: A story of Music and Memory," at Sundance. She brought the movie to Windrider Bay Area in 2014, and also discovered her own

takeaway when she visited her sister in the hospital one day.

Delia had early onset Alzheimer's, and had been nonverbal for years. Taking a cue from the movie, Bullock used her smart phone to play the Supremes' hit, "I Hear a Symphony," and her sister began singing and gesticulating. Bullock then made her sister a playlist of songs from their past, and said sharing music together "changed her life."

Life-changing is a common theme in many Windrider films. Take for example "Refugee," one of three short films being shown on the middle night of the forum, on Friday, June 29. The story revolves around a mother of five who left West Africa to come to the U.S. in hopes of securing a better future.

Joyce Chen co-directed and co-produced the award-winning film before taking a job at Facebook. Chen will be part of the panel of filmmakers appearing at Windrider after the three screenings that evening.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students. Ticket sales cover less than 20 percent of costs. Corporate sponsors, individual donors and partners make up the rest.

This year for the first time, a

major distributor, Focus Features, agreed to prerelease a movie at a public theater so Windrider fans could attend for free. Last month's Redwood City showing of "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" was so popular it had a wait list.

Another partner, Stanford Park Hotel, is offering free desserts on opening night to attendees who participate in organized group parties Windrider has dubbed "soirees." Hosts are asked to pre-register their parties online, and have the option of donating \$50 to obtain reserved seating at the Menlo-Atherton Performing Arts Center at 555 Middlefield Road in Atherton.

Go to windriderbayarea.org for more information about the forum and to buy tickets. Depending on demand, some tickets may be available at the door. The venue seats 492. Last year, the opening night audience filled almost 85 percent of the seats, and closing night sold out. ▣

On the cover: Terri Bullock's Atherton home does double-duty as the Windrider Film Forum Bay Area office.

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