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Nevada City's Wild and Scenic Film Festival turns 15

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Photo for The Union by John Hart |

Tourists and residents arrive in Nevada City Friday for the 15th Wild & Scenic Film Festival.

The motto of this year's Wild and Scenic Film Festival is "Where activism gets inspired." And according to Festival Director Melinda Booth, there's plenty of inspiration on tap during the final days of the 15th annual festival today and tomorrow.

"We believe in the power of film to change the world," Booth said.

More than 80 different films from filmmakers the world over will be shown at locations in Nevada City and Grass Valley to help plant the seed of inspiration festival directors hope will grow into environmental activism.

But the event doesn't stop at theater doors.

Yoga classes, art strolls, youth workshops, a wine auction, a virtual reality lounge and even a dance party are just some of the other events that will round out the Film Festival Special Events.

"We have 14 different free-of-charge activism workshops," Booth explained. "Each morning Saturday and Sunday we have a coffee talk from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m."

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KNOW & GO

WHO: South Yuba River Citizen's League

WHAT: 15th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival

WHERE: Multiple Venues in Nevada City and Grass Valley

WHEN: Today through Monday. Tickets range from \$8-\$500. The Friend of the Yuba Pass is \$500 this year and includes the VIP reception and reserved seating at the

Gary Snyder event. Festival Headquarters for will call is at the Reiki Kitchen, 315 Commercial Street in Nevada City. Consult festival program for individual prices and special events at <http://www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org>. Grass Valley will again have its own Mini-HQ at the Center for Arts, 314 W. Main Street., with all the same information, ticket sales and merchandise.

Sunday morning's coffee talk will feature a presentation called Moving Beyond Mind, which will show attendees alternate ways to become activists.

Literary science writing award-winner Jordan Fisher Smith is scheduled to be on hand to talk about Engineering Eden, at 3:30 p.m. Saturday at the

Golden Era free of charge.

Sunday's fireside chat will feature Chad Nicholson, affiliated with the film We the People 2.0, and will discuss engaging citizens in activism.

Tickets to the Film Festival's Gala event, held at the Nevada City Winery, are on sale for \$60 and will provide attendees an opportunity to rub elbows with many of the films' creators.

And, of course, the films will be shown — from two minutes at the shortest to 102 minutes at the longest — at 10 different locations between Nevada City and Grass Valley.

"More than half of the films will have a person to answer and receive questions from the audience following each film," Booth said.

The South Yuba River Citizens League, which formed 34 years ago to protect and restore the Yuba River, started the Wild and Scenic Film Festival as a way to help fund year-round conservation work for SYRCL's causes.

"Everything that we raise goes to SYRCL," Booth said.

Event organizers are expecting around 6,500 attendees to come from all over the region and are expecting some to come from all corners of the globe.

"Not only does it raise money for SYRCL, we plan it specifically in January because after the holidays we're not getting a ton of tourist traffic up here," Booth explained. "Having it in January helps the local economy during a slow time of year."

Booth recalled local hotels and restaurants exclaiming that the festival weekend is their busiest time of the year.

SYRCL has a variety of programs they sponsor all year with help from the funds raised during the film festival, which includes a watershed-wide cleanup along the Yuba.

"We have restoration projects from our headwater meadows all the way down the Yuba by Marysville," Booth said. "From Memorial day to Labor Day we put volunteers out there to let people know how to recreate safely; no fires, pack it in pack it out, and clean up after your dogs."

The citizens league was also at the forefront of protecting the State Parks from closure and has been involved in lobbying to get funding to repair the Bridgeport Bridge in the South Yuba River State Park, which Governor Brown recently signed off on.

SYRCL also has projects to restore salmon spawning areas that were destroyed during the days of hydraulic mining.

Become a Dam Watchdog is another SYRCL sponsored activism group aimed at questioning the plans for the Centennial Dam being proposed along the Bear River.

“We are just questioning what is going on with the dam,” Booth explained. “We want to make sure that if it happens that it happens correctly. We don’t believe that we need another big dam. There are a lot of other options to retain the water we need. The dam is a really short-sighted effort.”

An awards ceremony scheduled for 1 p.m. Sunday at the Miner’s Foundry will provide prizes to filmmakers in multiple categories. Those are; student filmmaker, environmental filmmaker, kids jury award, people’s choice award, best of festival, spirit of activism, most inspiring adventure film, best in theme, best short, as well as two juried awards.

Three to six of the winning films, depending on their length, will be shown Sunday and Monday nights at the Nevada Theater, 401 Broad St. in Nevada City.

For a complete list of film venues, show times, and other film festival activities, as well as a printable program, go to <http://www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org>.

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