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**CELEBRATING
THE 2025
GRADUATES!**

COVER PHOTO BY LINDA BLUE

DELIVERING NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS



Group reception: Monica Lenchés, Danette Wolpert Holman, Olivia Hansen, Hilary Carr, Kia Kiso, Téana David, Judi Weisbart, Wendy Kout, and Joan Sanger, Photographer: Monie Photography

CONSCIOUS LEGACY: Looking Through the Lens of Love

BY ELIZABETH MCCABE, PHOTOS BY BARON SPAFFORD

“It felt like a journey instead of a film festival... You couldn’t ignore the messages. They were speaking to people and connecting us in meaningful ways.”

— MONICA LENCHES

Legacy was the word—and the mood—on April 16th, when A Kinder World of Commerce hosted its 5th Legacy Hour in partnership with Santa Barbara’s vibrant and visionary new conscious film festival, **ILLUMINATE**, at the historic University Club. Thoughtfully curated, heart-forward, and richly inspiring, the afternoon embodied the mission of both organizations: to elevate human consciousness and spark personal, community, and planetary transformation. “This event was like an appetizer,” said **Kia Kiso**, Interim Executive Director of **ILLUMINATE**. “It was a wonderful opportunity for people to come together and get a taste of what’s to come.”

And what a taste it was. Guests were treated to a sneak peek of trailers from the **ILLUMINATE Film Festival**, that showed films the first week in May, giving attendees an exclusive look at this year’s themes, stories, and cinematic gems. The evening

also revisited the deeply moving, award-winning short film **Abundance: The Farmlink Story**—a powerful 23-minute documentary that left a lasting impression from last year’s festival and once again stirred hearts with its timeless message. “That film—more than any other—made by a person still in his 20s, Owen Dubeck—shows us how one person can change the world,” shared **Téana David**, **ILLUMINATE**’s Artistic Director. “By involving their friends, 20-something college students got food to people who needed it and prevented it from going to the landfill. It’s a beautiful example of film being used to inspire and create tangible impact.”

Kia added, “What’s incredible about *Abundance* is that it inspired Owen and other filmmakers to make more films with more impact.” *Abundance* is a beautiful example of how film can have a transformative ripple effect—a digital medium to inspire people, motivating them to action.

After the screening, Téana led a thought-provoking “talk-back” with the film’s LA-based director, followed by a unique “Reel Integration” session, where Kia invited attendees to reflect in small groups on what the film stirred in them. From



Téana David, Owen Dubeck, Monica Lenchés, and Kia Kiso



Monica introducing the Illuminate Film Festival



Digital Event Program



Diana Periera, Jeff Bochslar, Valorie Bishop, and Wendy Kout



Kia Kiso, Interim Executive Director



Téana David, Carrie Clarke-Kenny and other attending guests

inspiration to action, every moment buzzed with connection, curiosity, and impact.

Adding to the experience, Monica Lenchés, referred to lovingly as “the hostess with the mostess,” grounded the evening with a guided meditation that set the tone for a night rooted in intention. “I like how focused these initiatives are on impact,” she reflected. “One of the women left me a 3-minute voicemail afterwards that she was sending the film to all of her “mommy” friends with young children. I could just feel her buzzing with inspiration and excitement. Another attendee called to let me know she had invited Owen onto her podcast!”

Gratitude poured in for the sponsors who made the evening possible: Dhara Solanki (Pelvic Health Center of Santa Barbara), Cindy Feinberg (Stroll Magazine, Hope Ranch), Marine Schuman (Brighten Solar), **ILLUMINATE**, and the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden—whose contributions, including garden and festival tickets, added to the spirit of generosity.

And Monica? She’s didn’t just attend the festival—she sponsored one of its most anticipated films: **Between the**

Mountain and the Sky, which was shown on Saturday, May 3rd at 6:30 pm. “To my amazement, I met the remarkable woman featured in the documentary, Maggie Doyne, three years ago, while she was promoting her memoir in Santa Barbara,” she said. “Her story moved me to tears and is truly unforgettable.”—I’m certain the film will leave a lasting imprint on our hearts.” Of the 17 friends who joined Monica that night, one texted her after the film to say that he and his wife were so inspired, they donated \$5,000 to **BlinkNow**—the nonprofit that supports Maggie’s work.

According to Téana, the film “is a personal journey story about a young woman who travels to Nepal on a gap-year and ends up settling there and starting an orphanage. And while it’s her journey from love to loss and back to love, it’s a theme that awakens all of us to our greatest potential. If that woman can do such meaningful work halfway across the world, it calls forth your own sense of service. It’s incredibly inspiring.”

Festival buzz was already in the air thanks to the Oneness of Humanity Micro-Shorts initiative—films 90-second or less

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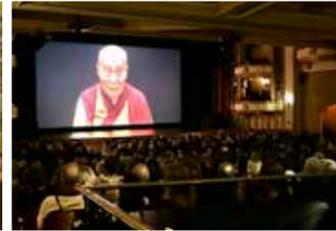
ILLUMINATE FILM FESTIVAL



Kia Kiso, Interim Executive Director, and Téana David, Artistic Director



Kit Thomas and Lynne Twist, Photographer: Monie Photography



"Wisdom of Happiness" at the Granada Theater, Photographer: Téana David



Oneness of Humanity Micro Shorts Contest Award Recipients with sponsor Olivia Hansen and festival staff Danette Wolpert Holman, Kia Kiso, Téana David, Hilary Carr and Kit Thomas, Photographer: Monie Photography



Sheva Carr speaking at the Industry Hive Day, Photographer: Jenn Morse



Feeding Tomorrow: Geoff Green, Michael Ableman, Sherry Villanueva, Oliver English, and Simon English, Photographer: Monie Photography



Illuminate Film Festival Reception, Photographer: Kia Kiso



The Brothers Koren, Photographer: Monie Photography

inspired by the theme Love, Kindness, and Joy, with support from Spiritual Life TV Channel. With nearly 700 submissions and more than a quarter of a million impressions and 38,000 views, likes, and comments, viewers from around the world voted.

A jury including Chaz Ebert, Louie Schwartzberg, and Xiye Bastida awarded cash prizes totaling \$25,000—another example of ILLUMINATE's real-world impact through storytelling.

Téana, ever the architect of the festival's emotional arc, shared her curatorial vision: "We don't see the films as individuals. We see them as the journey from head to heart." This year's theme, "Looking Through the Lens of Love," echoed through every offering of the festival. From opening night's, *The Wisdom of Happiness*—an intimate portrait of the Dalai Lama, executive produced by Richard Gere—and Friday evening's *Rescued Hearts*, which explored the powerful healing connection between horses and humans, to Sunday morning's free community screening of *Finding Happy* and the closing workshop, *The Art of Integration*, led by Matt and Joy Kahn, the festival pulsed with purpose and individual transformation.

One of the festival's final screenings was *Feeding Tomorrow*, a documentary directed by Oliver and Simon English that follows a brave group of visionary leaders in agriculture, healthcare, and education as they work to

build a more just and regenerative food system. "This film underscores one of ILLUMINATE's core values: the importance of joining together as a community to focus on solutions and create a more caring civilization," said Téana.

As the Legacy Hour reminded everyone, ILLUMINATE is not just a film festival—it's a movement. A celebration of light in dark times. As Monica said best, "You couldn't ignore the impact. It was happening in real time on multiple levels."

To join the movement towards A Kinder World of Commerce and unite with others and inspire positive change, visit Monica's website at monicalenchesre.com/community-matters and ILLUMINATE's at www.illuminatefilmfestival.com.

By supporting and participating in these campaigns, individuals and businesses together can make a meaningful and lasting difference. In a time when the suffering of many is increasing and in a world where you can be anything, please be kinder, more caring, and more generous than ever.



ILLUMINATE's Website



Monica's Website

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