

## Up & Coming

# Going Local

*Filmmakers and locations right in our backyard.* BY KASIA PAWLOWSKA

**Every year, hundreds of filmmakers** flock from all around the world to show their films at the Mill Valley Film Festival, yet out of thousands of entries and despite the rigorous judging, movies made in the Bay Area or by local directors always make the cut. Here are a handful of bay-centric entries screening this year.

**Filmmaker Elizabeth Sher** A celebrated criminal attorney, lesbian and supporter of the arts, Penny Cooper, aka “champion of the marginalized,” has been an integral figure in many societal changes from the 1940s to today. *Penny* tells the story of Cooper’s mission to make a difference in the lives of others, all while maintaining a positive outlook amid her own set of struggles.

**Filmmaker Brian Perkins** Perkins will be debuting his first feature, *The Golden Kingdom*, for what is also the film’s U.S. premiere. The picture portrays the peaceful lives of four young Buddhist monks (nonactors) and their abbot in a remote mountain monastery in Myanmar. The serenity is shattered one day when the abbot needs to make a perilous trek through a mountain pass in order to get to the city.

**Filmmaker Eli Adler** *Surviving Skokie* is a documentary that focuses on Adler’s father, Jack, a Polish immigrant and concentration camp survivor who built a life and raised a family in Skokie, Illinois. The freedom America allows reveals its dark side when a group of neo-Nazis plans to march through the town that has become a haven for hundreds of survivors.

**Director and Producer James Redford** *Paper Tigers* examines an unlikely teaching method

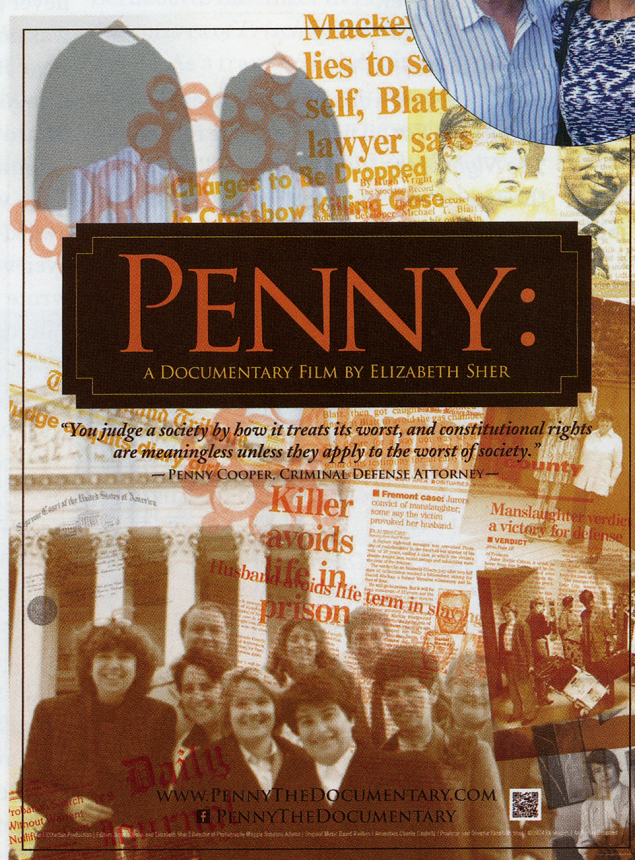
being implemented in Lincoln High’s classes for troubled teens: unconditional love. Redford follows Walla Walla, Washington, high schoolers in his sixth documentary about responses to the problems of our times.

**Filmmaker Robin Hauser Reynolds** The documentary explores a topic very relevant to Bay Area residents: the history and current state of tech and the computer science industry, especially vis-a-vis women and people of color. In *Code:*

*Debugging the Gender Gap’s* California premiere, Reynolds looks at these industry workers and presents their stories and views on the benefits (creative and financial) and downsides (sexism and racism) of their profession.

**Filmmaker Marlene Morris** Edythe Boone teaches public art to everyone from West Oakland middle schoolers to Richmond high school seniors, and her past is equally wide-ranging. Morris follows Boone, whose art can be found all over the Bay Area, taking in the great events of her time. These events keep coming, as we see when the death of Boone’s nephew, Eric Garner, becomes a national symbol for racist policing in the world premiere of *A New Color: The Very Public Art of Edythe Boone*.

**Filmmaker Amir Soltani** *Dogtown Redemption* focuses on the lives, histories and struggles of Oakland recyclers who trek as far as 10 miles with recyclables that often weigh upwards of 100 pounds, for a meager payout. Soltani’s interviews raise questions about socioeconomic realities and paint a compelling picture of an invisible group.



**Above:** Penny Cooper (left) and filmmaker Elizabeth Sher.