

Art deco Orinda theatre featured in award-winning short

By Diane Claytor



Award-winning "Let's Go to the Movies" producer Julia Anderson (right) and her assistant producer, Ksenia Firsova. Photo provided

Not every person who's passionate about movies longs to walk the red carpet or find themselves in the pages of People magazine. Many, like Moraga resident and movie lover Julia Anderson, want to work behind the scenes. In fact, Anderson describes herself as "definitely a behind-the-camera type of person" who "loves the process" of developing and producing a video.

So, last year, when she spotted a poster promoting the Lamorinda Arts Council's ShortDocs competition, Anderson figured it was a natural project for her to take on. At the time, she was working part-time at the Orinda Theatre, a movie house she loved and believed to be an important part of the community. It made sense to her to showcase this art-deco style theatre in her ShortDocs entry.

"I love that experience of going to the movies," Anderson noted, "experiencing something in a room full of people sharing the very same emotions."

Anderson remembered a class field trip when she was a student at Campolindo: a film festival at the Castro Theatre in San Francisco. "The Castro was one of those old gorgeous movie theater palaces, and the Orinda Theatre is in that same category," she said.

Reaching out to some fellow

filmmakers who agreed to help her, the recent San Francisco State Fiction Filmmaking graduate began creating her documentary, which, according to the Lamorinda Arts Council rules, could not exceed six minutes in length.

She interviewed Derek Zerk, co-owner of the theatre, as well as theatregoers and a longtime projectionist at the theatre.

The original concept for her award-winning documentary, "Let's Go To The Movies," was focusing on the history of this beautiful Orinda treasure, built by movie fanatic Donald Rheem between 1937-1941. (In 1982, the Orinda Theatre was designated one of the National Register of Historic Places).

"As I reviewed the footage," Anderson explained, "I realized how significant the theatre is to the community. That totally stood out for me more than the historical

facts. So the focal point changed from what the theatre once was to what it is today — and at the same time reminding viewers that independent movie theaters are struggling ... and this is a serious problem, especially in smaller communities."

"Let's Go To The Movies" received a 2018 Lamorinda Arts Council Best Short Documentary Film by an Adult award, a prize that means a lot to the young budding filmmaker.

Anderson has always loved going to the movies. As a child, she'd go with her family and fondly remembers summers when her grandfather would take her. "I've always liked writing and telling stories, as well as all the visual arts," she said. "I also love to draw and make costumes." She soon realized that film production was a culmination of all those skills and hobbies, "everything I loved the most."

Currently, Anderson is working as a production assistant on a pilot for a potential TV show; it's a two-month job and has her living in Santa Cruz. Before she left, she met with the Moraga Community Foundation to discuss producing a video promoting the newly re-opened Rheem Theatre. As Anderson sees it, it would be more of a public service announcement, she said, with the purpose of encouraging the community to support this historic and beautiful movie house.

To see Anderson's winning documentary, "Let's Go To The Movies," go to <https://vimeo.com/251086048>.

2018 Lamorinda Arts Council's ShortDocs winners

- Best Short Documentary Film by an Elementary School Student: "Search & Rescue Dogs," by Brooke Parker
- Best Short Documentary Film by a Middle School Student: "The Homeless Project," by Neve Abcari
- Best Short Documentary Film by a High School Student: "No Limits Collaborative," by Caroline Rupert & Julia Hatfield
- Best Short Documentary Film by an Adult – two winners: "Let's Go to the Movies," by Julia Anderson; and "Notes," by Tina Elliot
- Audience Award for Best Short Documentary Film by a Student: "Search & Rescue Dogs," by Brooke Parker

Grain-free doesn't mean problem-free

By Mona Miller, DVM

The Food and Drug Administration announced recently that it is investigating a link between grain-free dog diets and a certain type of heart disease called Dilated Cardiomyopathy. This is a new investigation, with cases reported by specialty veterinary hospitals across the nation in the past year. It appears to have involved a small percentage of the many dogs that eat diets with alternatives to grain. It is unclear what the exact cause-and-effect mechanism is, but may likely involve grain-free diets, decreased blood levels of taurine (a particular amino acid), and certain breeds or individuals within certain breeds.

Dilated Cardiomyopathy is a common heart failure problem in certain purebred dogs. It usually affects large breeds such as Dobermans, Great Danes and Boxers, as well as American Cocker Spaniels. It affects the heart muscle, causing decreased function and "sloppy" contractions, resulting in an enlarged poorly-functioning heart. There is most likely a genetic component in some breeds.



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her son, two cats and yellow Labrador. She attended UC Berkeley as an undergraduate, and received her DVM from UC Davis. She has been happy to call Lafayette home since 2001. She can be reached via email at MonaSDVM@aol.com. She welcomes questions from readers that may get incorporated into a column.

Taurine deficiency as a non-genetic cause of heart disease is not a new finding. In 1987, UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine reported that this particular amino acid deficiency in cat food caused DCM. The petfood industry as a whole stepped up and started to include taurine as an ingredient in cat food; thus, it is a very rare condition nowadays. Most likely, a veterinarian who graduated from vet school after the late 1990s has probably not seen this type of heart failure in cats fed commercially balanced diets. The good news is that DCM caused by taurine deficiency can be a reversible condition in some individuals.

It is unclear what the significance is regarding the grain-free diet link to taurine deficiency. It's possible that it involves the absence of grains, or conversely the presence of legumes. Or it's possible that legumes may interfere with an individual's ability to absorb taurine. Not all dogs that eat grain-free diets are negatively affected.

Grain-free diets became popular about 11 years ago, after a recall of pet foods contaminated with melamine from China. At that time, "boutique" diets became more available and popular. These diets included a variety of carbohydrates that substituted for grains – potatoes, peas, lentils, chickpeas, just to name a few.

This investigation allows the opportunity to discuss whether dogs in general need or benefit from grain-free diets.

According to a recent New York Times article, one veterinary nutritionist at Tufts Veterinary Medicine School, Dr. Lisa Freeman, says, "Contrary to advertising and popular belief, there is no research to demonstrate that grain-free diets offer any health benefits over diets that contain grains." For the record, I agree completely. I

advise my clients that dogs are not inherently gluten or grain-intolerant, just as humans as a species are not. There are definitely individuals who have gluten-intolerance, both humans and canines. These individuals will have problems with digestion and sometimes with skin allergies, and they should definitely avoid grains and gluten-containing foods. But for the rest of us, until or unless we develop a problem, it's perfectly fine to eat "mainstream" foods.

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