

Published March 30th, 2022

Moraga resident wins Best Screenplay in film festival competition

By Jennifer Wake



Sandy Fox-Sohner Photo provided

Moraga resident Sandy Fox-Sohner was named winner of the screenplay competition this month at the Vancouver International Women in Film Festival. Her script, "The Professor," tells the inspiring true story of Sofia Kovalevsky, a self-taught mathematician who dreamt of teaching mathematics at a university when universities did not allow women. In the late 1800s, she devised a daring escape from her homeland in Russia to make her mark in the West. She became the first female professor in Europe in this uplifting story of freedom and perseverance.

Fox-Sohner learned of this story while teaching high school mathematics. Some of the girls still had the impression that math is difficult for them because of their gender. In response, she lectured on famous women mathematicians, and the story of Kovalevsky inspired her and her students. The screenplay celebrates a brave woman who fought for equality and ultimately opened doors in education for other women to follow. It also celebrates those men, who, in the 19th century, made decisions based on merit, not gender or ethnicity, often risking their own careers to ensure justice and fairness prevailed.

A resident of Moraga for 37 years, Fox-Sohner is active in American Association of University Women - Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette. She works on the organization's Tech Trek program, the science and math camp for middle school girls, and the annual AAUW-OML STEM Conference at Saint Mary's College. Dr. Kristen Beck, former mathematics professor at Saint Mary's, was involved in the organization of the STEM conference and provided accurate mathematical formulas for the screenplay.

Maria Sigrist, co-author, is a director in Switzerland. A co-producer in Germany is also attached to this project. A few additional producing partners are needed before filming can begin.

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