

BENEFIT NEPAL FILM FESTIVAL SET FOR JUNE 15
ONE-DAY EVENT TO BENEFIT GRASSROOTS EARTHQUAKE AID IN NEPAL
SPECIAL GUESTS INCLUDE WES NISKER, AMISHA HADA, JEFF GREENWALD

A special day-long film festival to benefit grassroots earthquake recovery aid in Nepal will take place on June 15 at the Smith Rafael Film Center in San Rafael. The Benefit Nepal Film Festival is being presented by a group of concerned organizations, and will screen a number of films from or about Nepal, with special guests in person and live via Skype.

Program highlights include the **US premiere** of the remastered Academy Award-nominated drama, *Himalaya*, by Eric Valli; the **Bay Area premiere** of *Beyond the Edge*, about the first climb of Everest, by Leanne Pooley; plus films from **local filmmakers**, who will attend, including *Mustang—Journey of Transformation*, by **Will Parrinello**, and *Light of the Valley*, by **Pema Gellek**. Additional selections and the complete schedule will be announced prior to the event.

Special guests will introduce each program. Author/performer/meditation teacher **Wes Nisker**, Himalayan Film Festival director **Amisha Hada** and author/performer **Jeff Greenwald** are confirmed. Several filmmakers and recovery aid workers will participate via live Skype connections from Nepal and elsewhere.

There will be three programs of films: 2pm, 5pm and 7:30pm. Donation for each program is \$20; an all-day pass is \$50. Tickets are available at the Smith Rafael Film Center box office or online at rafaelfilm.cafilm.org. The event website is www.benefitnepalfilmfestival.org.

“As soon as we understood the extent of the disaster, our first call was to the folks at the Rafael,” says **Gaetano Kazuo Maida**, executive director of Buddhist Film Foundation, the organizing co-presenter. “They generously offered their Theater One for this benefit. All the filmmakers and distributors enthusiastically agreed to participate, and all are donating their works. The films vividly demonstrate the beauty of Nepal and the vitality and diversity of its people... it’s not just abstract any more.”

Award-winning local filmmaker **Will Parrinello** has been a key organizer of the event. His many years of working in the Himalayas established him as part of a strong network of NGOs, filmmakers, climbers and aid workers. “I have many friends in Nepal and I was getting heartbreaking reports of the earthquake’s devastation, especially in the rural areas,” Parrinello says. “I immediately knew we could do something here in the Bay Area, which has a special connection with the Himalayas, to help.”

“**100% of the proceeds goes to grassroots recovery aid in Nepal**,” says Mr. Maida. The beneficiary organizations were selected very carefully. “We reached out for advice to our friends and colleagues on the ground in Nepal, and **Drokpa, GMIN and Karuna-**

Shechen were chosen based on their effective work, their transparency and their long term commitment to full recovery in Nepal.”

Other co-presenters include **Alive Mind, Berkeley FILM Foundation, California Film Institute, Center for Asian American Media, Ethical Traveler, Guna Foundation, Himalayan Fair, Himalayan Film Festival, Kino Lorber, KPFA, Light of Buddhadharma Foundation International, Seva Foundation, Sundance Selects, Telluride MountainFilm and Wilderness Travel.**

“The participation of so many wonderful co-presenters helps get the word out so the event can make a meaningful contribution to the efforts on the ground there. Folks who can’t make it to the event are encouraged to consider donating online.”

The Benefit Nepal Film Festival is a production of the independent nonprofit Buddhist Film Foundation (BFF) based in Berkeley. Since its founding in 2000, BFF has presented or co-presented over 350 films from twenty-two countries to audiences in ten countries on three continents. The BFF mission is to utilize this powerful medium to foster wide awareness of and appreciation for compassion, mindfulness, impermanence and interdependence. www.buddhistfilmfoundation.org

The non-profit California Film Institute celebrates and promotes film as art and education through the presentation of the acclaimed Mill Valley Film Festival, cultivation of the next generation of filmmakers and audiences through CFI Education programs and year-round programming at one of the leading non-profit theatres in the country, the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center. This state-of-the-art three-screen facility acts as both a film center and a town hall. With an eclectic calendar of programs that includes documentaries, silent film, retrospectives, classics, contemporary international film and first-run theatrical releases, the Smith Rafael Film Center covers the breadth of social, environmental and cultural issues. www.cafilm.org