

Award-winning documentary wows audience at Lafayette Library

By Sora O'Doherty



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Kopila Valley Children's Home founder Maggie Doyme, center. Documentary film maker Jeremy Power Regimbal, left and Lafayette sponsor Karen Mulvaney, right, after the showing of the documentary, "Between the Mountain and the Sky".

Although the film was cheerful and uplifting, several audience members who rose to make comments afterwards found themselves simply choked with tears. Such was the overwhelming response to "Between the Mountain and the Sky," a documentary that tells the true story of Maggie Doyme, who, right out of high school, founded what would become an amazing home for orphaned children in Nepal.

After graduating in New Jersey, Doyme took a gap year, during which she volunteered in India and met Tope Bahadur Malla, who later became her co-founder in Kopila Valley Children's Home. Tope had a very hard childhood in Nepal, where he was born into a very poor family and was soon orphaned. He met Doyme while she was

volunteering on a child welfare project in northern India just after the end of the civil war in Nepal. Together, they returned to Nepal and started the Kopila Valley Children's Home and School.

Doyme soon found herself as mother to 40 orphans, whom she sought to raise with love, compassion, and education. Soon the 40 became 53. Her efforts, alongside Malla, have been wildly successful, and she can now claim to have raised 80 children, many of whom have gone on to higher education and prestigious careers.

After a tragic accident at the home, Doyme returned to the US to recover from her shock and depression. During that time, she met musician and filmmaker Jeremy Power Regimbal. They fell in love, and Regimbal moved with

Doyme to Nepal. They married and now have their own children, who are part of the Kopila family.

Regimbal spent nine years collecting first-hand materials for the documentary film, "Between the Mountain and the Sky." He incorporated a great deal of material on Kopila Valley Children's Home that had been accumulated over the previous ten years of coverage by news agencies such as CNN, who in 2015 had named Doyme as a CNN Hero.

The firm charts Doyme's progress with the home for over 19 years. Doyme was born in New Jersey in 1986. She began her home and school in Nepal in 2005, using \$5,000 she had earned babysitting in High School.

In Nepal she had met a six-year-old girl named Hima, who was barely surviving on the few rupees she earned by breaking stones in a dry riverbed and selling them. Doyme was convinced that there had to be a better, more compassionate way. Doyme helped Hima go to school, paying for her tuition, uniform, and books, and expanded her efforts to help more children. Later, she joined forces with Malla to found Kopila Valley Children's Home.

In 2007, Doyme founded the Blink Now Foundation, a non-profit organization that pro-

vides financial support and management oversight first to the Kopila Valley School and Children's Home, and to the later developed Women's Center, Health Clinic, Big Sisters' Home, and New Campus in Surkhet, Nepal. The Foundation is an official 501(c)(3) organization with a US-based board. It has headquarters located in the United States and Nepal.

In 2022 Doyme published "Between the Mountain and the Sky, A Mother's Story of Love, Loss, Healing and Hope" based on her experiences in Nepal. She has been awarded many honors, including the following: 2008 Cosmo Girl of the Year, 2009 Grand Prize Winner of the Do Something Awards, 2012 Speaker at Forbes 400 Summit on Philanthropy, 2013 Speaker at Forbes Women's Summit: Power Redefined, 2013 Forbes Excellence in Education Award, and 2014 Unsung Hero of Compassion, awarded by the Dalai Lama.

After the showing of "Between the Mountain and the Sky," one interesting question from the audience was, "how many homes do you have now?" And Doyme's answer was, "Just one." She explained, "We made the conscious decision to focus on our community. We took it slow and did it right." In a war torn country among natural

disasters, Kopila Valley Children's Home has had over 1,500 visitors from NGOs in just the last year.

"We are mentoring other community leaders," Doyme added, "we share everything we have. 15 organizations shadow us for a week each month." Doyme went on to talk about the 100 female farmers who provide the school lunch program.

Doyme chuckled as she said, "I might have the record for being the mother of the most children." She glowed with pride as she talked about her first children, who call themselves "the OGs," who have become nurses and engineers and filmmakers. Her advice to us? "Ask yourself, 'how can I love more?' If you live this way, you'll have the most beautiful life."

The documentary film was brought to Lafayette by the personal sponsorship of Karen and Tom Mulvaney. A long-time resident of Lafayette, Karen was on the library foundation for 18 years, and was instrumental in getting the Lafayette Library built. During her time on the foundation, she brought a broad range of interesting people to the library's speaker series. Karen became involved with Blink Now after reading an article about Maggie Doyme by Nicholas Kristof in the New York Times in 2010.

Karen was particularly interested because Maggie was the same age -22- as her daughter, Meg, now Meg Mulvaney Geistwint. Today both are 38, and Meg, after graduating from St. Mary's College and earning her Masters degree there, went to work for Maggie, teaching English in Nepal as a volunteer.

Karen is a champion of Maggie, and she and her husband helped fund Doyme's new high school. The Mulvaney's visited the Kopila Valley Children's Home in 2014, just before a large earthquake devastated Nepal. Doyme is now working on building earthquake safe structures. Blink Now provides all sorts of disaster services, Mulvaney explained, as they have learned how to deal with major events such as earthquakes and monsoons.

At this time, the documentary is making the rounds of film festivals, and winning many awards, but Mulvaney hopes that it will be available to the public in the future. Currently it is only available through private showings, such as in Lafayette. They would need a large distributor to take an interest in the film.

A trailer of the documentary is available on the school's website: www.kopilavalley.school.edu.np

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