Influential Women Features Merridee Book, CEO & Artistic Director of the Coronado Island Film Festival



CA, UNITED STATES, September 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Film and entertainment executive leads the continued growth of Coronado's internationally recognized independent film festival

CORONADO, Calif. — Merridee Book, CEO and Artistic Director of the Coronado Island Film Festival, has been featured by Influential Women for her leadership in film, entertainment and nonprofit arts, and her work expanding the festival's cultural impact and profile within the independent film community.

With more than two decades of experience across film, entertainment, marketing, production and nonprofit arts, Book brings both creative vision and organizational leadership to the Coronado Island Film Festival. She joined the festival during its formative years and assumed the combined CEO and Artistic Director role in 2020, overseeing programming, partnerships, fundraising, sponsorships, community engagement and the festival's year-round initiatives.

Under Book's leadership, CIFF has continued to expand its programming and industry presence, presenting more than 120 films annually and welcoming thousands of filmmakers, industry professionals and audiences to Coronado. The festival's acclaimed ShortsFest has grown into a signature program, creating a dedicated platform for short-form storytelling and emerging filmmakers.

The festival has also strengthened its year-round role in the region through educational programming, community outreach, military partnerships, classic cinema screenings and

screenwriting initiatives. These programs reflect Book's broader vision for CIFF as more than an annual event, but as a cultural resource that connects audiences, filmmakers and the community throughout the year.

Book credits much of her success to team-building: hiring specialists with expertise beyond her own, then giving them the room to lead. "Success attracts success, and energy attracts the same energy," she said, adding that strong teams are built on trust and accountability rather than drama.

That approach helped carry the organization through some of the entertainment industry's most challenging recent stretches, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Hollywood labor strikes, while continuing to build the festival's visibility and reach.

Book's leadership philosophy rests on four pillars: integrity, respect, loyalty and authenticity. She also credits advice from her father that has stayed with her throughout her career: never burn a bridge.

"Professional paths are rarely linear," Book said, noting that relationships formed early in a career can have lasting significance. Today's emerging filmmaker, screenwriter or creative professional may become tomorrow's major force in the industry.

That philosophy is particularly relevant to Book's work with independent filmmakers and emerging talent. She believes festivals can provide more than a screening opportunity; they can create meaningful connections, visibility and access to relationships that help artists move their careers forward.

Her tenure has also brought national recognition to CIFF. MovieMaker Magazine named the Coronado Island Film Festival among its "Top 50 Film Festivals Worth the Entry Fee" worldwide in both 2025 and 2026, recognizing the festival's contribution to independent filmmaking and its experience for filmmakers and audiences.

For Book, growth is not simply about scale. It is about creating meaningful experiences and opportunities for storytellers.

"I'm looking for films and experiences that have something to say and give people something to talk about," Book said. "We want great storytelling, of course, but also discovery, artistry, craftsmanship and a little bit of surprise. The Coronado audience appreciates quality, but they also want to be entertained."

Book is equally focused on preserving Coronado's historic connection to Hollywood while positioning the festival for the future. CIFF's programming celebrates the art and craft of cinema while creating opportunities to explore emerging voices, new technologies and the evolving entertainment landscape.

The Coronado Island Film Festival's 11th annual festival will take place November 4–8, 2026, bringing filmmakers, screenwriters, industry professionals and audiences together for five days of films, special engagements, industry conversations, culinary experiences and celebrations in the historic seaside community of Coronado.

Book holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Mass Communications/Media from the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is active in regional arts, business and cultural organizations and serves as an Executive Advisor for World NGO Day.

Through her leadership of the Coronado Island Film Festival, Book continues to champion independent storytelling while building connections between filmmakers, audiences, the entertainment industry and Coronado's enduring Hollywood legacy.

Learn More About Merridee Book:
Influential Women profile

About the Coronado Island Film Festival
The Coronado Island Film Festival celebrates the art and science of cinema, bringing together filmmakers, industry professionals and audiences in one of Southern California's most iconic cinematic destinations. The festival presents independent films, shorts, classic cinema, industry conversations, educational programs and special events while honoring Coronado's rich Hollywood history.

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