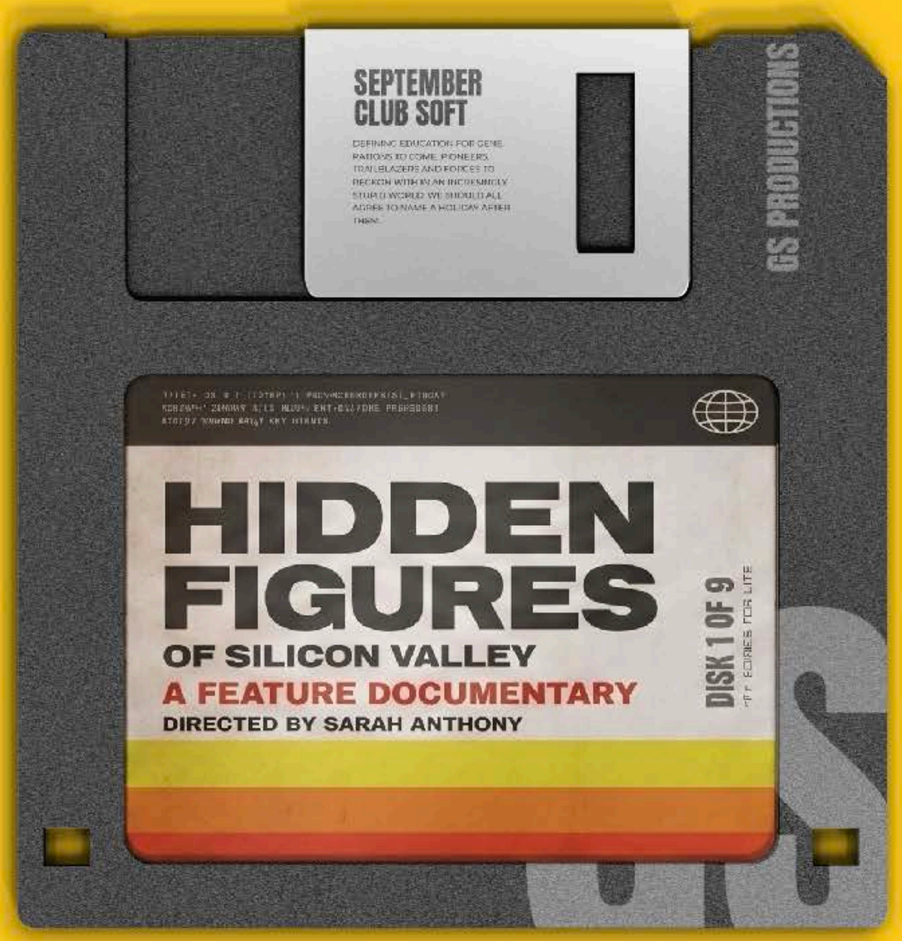

SEPTEMBER
CLUB SOFT
DEFINING EDUCATION FOR GENE RATIONS TO COME. PIONEERS, TRAILBLAZERS AND FORCES TO RECKON WITH IN AN INCOMPREHENSIBLY STUPID WORLD. WE SHOULD ALL AGREE TO NAME A HOLIDAY AFTER THEM.
GS PRODUCTIONS
HIDDEN
FIGURES
OF SILICON VALLEY
A FEATURE DOCUMENTARY
DIRECTED BY SARAH ANTHONY
DISK 1 OF 9
FF FORMES FOR LIFE

In 1977 the first personal computers hit the market, and nobody knew how to use them.

This is the story of the women who spearheaded the digital revolution and taught us all.

Their work built iconic companies like Apple, IBM and Microsoft, and raised a generation on Sesame Street, Oregon Trail and Reader Rabbit.

They shepherded the world into the digital age, brought computers and the internet to classrooms, and transformed how we learn.

Often the only women in the room, they found each other and joined a network of trailblazing women who would change the world in ways we couldn't possibly imagine.

40 years later, with the defunding of the Department of Education, much of what they built is at risk.

And A.I. is driving a new technological sea change, forcing us once again to examine how we handle education.

But while most people their age are easing into retirement, these women are still on the case, mentoring the next generation of innovators and guiding us through another major shift in educational technology.

How It Started

At a time when the career choices for women were nurse, wife, teacher or secretary.

Our ladies broke the mold.

They are the “hidden figures” of Silicon Valley. Trailblazers who quietly built the bridge between classrooms and code.

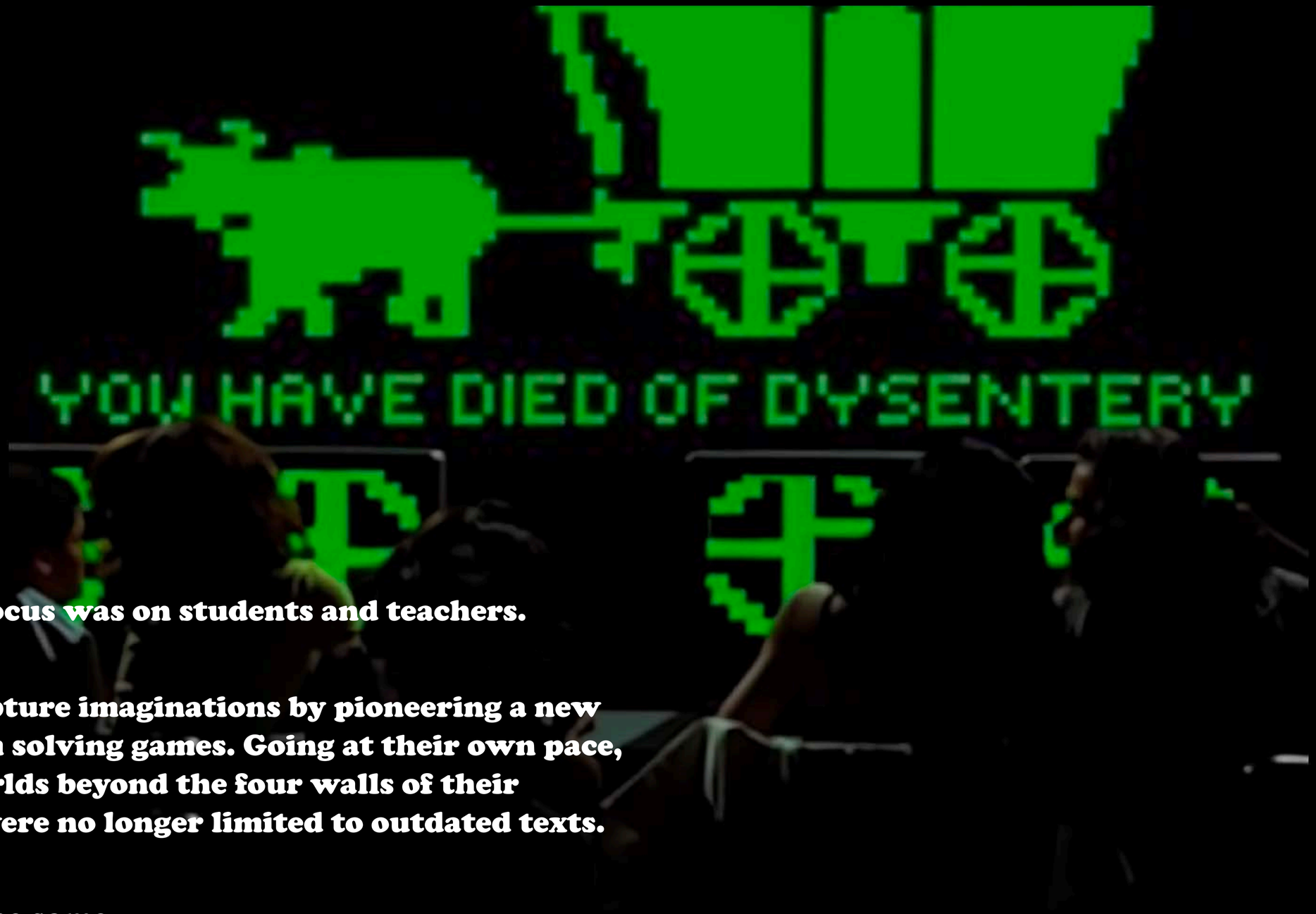
The Birth of EdTech

In the early 1980s, most adults were unfamiliar with PCs. It was kids, fearless and curious, who intuitively engaged with early technology—igniting a full-blown race to develop hardware and educational software—think Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?

At the time, men in tech dismissed education as “women’s work” so when projects involving schools and software were passed around like hot potatoes, they often landed in the hands of women.

They were former teachers who understood both pedagogy and emerging tech. They became the bridge between engineers and educators, between startups and school districts, between Silicon Valley and Washington D.C.

And they knew whoever captured schools, captured the entire market.



Their Mission

Educators at heart, their focus was on students and teachers.

They would engage and capture imaginations by pioneering a new class of innovative problem solving games. Going at their own pace, students could explore worlds beyond the four walls of their classrooms, and teachers were no longer limited to outdated texts.

Learning would never be the same.

They created something from nothing:

- They wrote the first textbook for using a computer,
- the first curriculum for teaching with technology
- lobbied for national education policy to give every child access to the best possible education, regardless of race and socioeconomic background
- And pioneered online education.

They're the reason schools have the internet and computers today.

They brought venture capital to the education space, and laid the foundation for a $213 billion global gaming industry by showcasing the power of interactive learning.

Leading the charge

- When congress tapped Linda Roberts to write a report on how computers were being used in American schools, she didn't have a clue. But she did know how to ask a lot of questions.

- Her search took her across the country - from classrooms to computer labs - meeting the unlikely pioneers of the digital education revolution. The result: "Power On! New Tools for Teaching and Learning."

- The government now had a guide for how to bring computers into the classroom, and Linda had a new network of powerful women who'd forever change education.

- As the head of the Department of Educational Technology, and with the support and guidance of her new friends, she helped to create the e-rate, ensuring access to the internet for schools across America.

“Old” Friends

Despite working for rival companies, they collaborated, championed each other, and kept in touch. These women didn’t just build an industry, they built a life together.

One Super Bowl weekend, they skipped the game and booked a spa retreat in Calistoga. They talked shop, strategized over dinner, and laughed over drinks. That became an annual ritual, as they helped each other navigate a wild ride that took them around the world. Some of them even helped bring computers into Russia after the fall of the Iron Curtain!

Today, their sisterhood illustrates the value of friendship, and the importance of laughter in facing all of life’s challenges: divorce, death, aging and even a mafia kidnapping.

These women are redefining what it means to turn 80, and beyond.

The Women

Marge Cappo
"The Designer"

Marge started as a math teacher before joining the Minnesota Education Computing Consortium (MECC) where she developed the version of Oregon Trail for the Apple II - the most iconic educational game of the 80s and 90s, selling over 65 million copies. She then ventured into private industry and joined Sunburst Communications, where she developed and published more than 200 educational products such as The Factory (used in two-thirds of U.S. schools), The Muppet Learning Keys, and The Voyage of the Mimi. Marge became known for designing innovative, problem-solving software and simulations that modeled real world scenarios and allowed students to make choices and experience consequences. Later, she founded Wings for Learning and Learning in Motion. Most recently, she came out of retirement to join Triangle Learning Community, using AI to help preschool children build oral language and numeracy through storytelling.

Dr. Linda Roberts
"The Deal Maker"

Linda was a teacher and reading specialist invited to the original brainstorming session for Sesame Street. As the "only teacher" among experts, she was the one who saw the potential and power of animated letters and sounds, inventive songs, and characters that would engage pre-schoolers. Linda was also instrumental in creating the iconic television program The Electric Company, focused on teaching kids how to read. In Washington, D.C. she shaped education in ways we can only imagine. At the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment with bipartisan support, she authored POWER ON! - New Tools for Teaching & Learning; one of the most widely adopted US government reports of all time. She was appointed by President Clinton to run the Office of Education Technology in the Dept of Education, where she played a key role in the creation of the E-rate for internet access in every classroom. Linda served decades on the boards of the George Lucas' Education Foundation, Sesame Street Workshop, Carnegie Learning, ProQuest, Digital Promise and many, many more.

Kathy Hurley
"The Rolodex"

Kathy began her career as a Special Ed teacher before accepting a position as Senior VP of Education at Developmental Learning Materials. DLM developed Arcade's, one of the first academic software products for the K-12 market. She quickly honed her super powers in networking, marketing and sales. She next worked for Grolier, one of the first edtech companies to introduce the Encyclopedia on CD-Rom. She then went to IBM as a marketing and sales executive in their K-12 division. Later she ran school marketing for Kevin O'Leary's The Learning Company which bought up EdTech companies before being acquired by Mattel for $3.5 billion. Pearson CEO Dame Marjorie Scardino hired Kathy to lead the One Pearson Initiative, and she served as EVP of the Pearson Foundation, leading global phlanthropic efforts. At 70, she attended an advanced learning course at Harvard, where she founded a non-profit called Girls Thinking Globally with Deb Devries. She remains active in the Ed Tech space as a consultant. Today she and Deb are writing a book on the power of networking, Always Networking.

The Women

Dr. Bobbi Kurshan
"The InnovatHer"

When Bobbi told her professor she wanted to study computers in education, he laughed and told her "computers will never be used in the classroom." So she graduated and went on to earn one of the first ever doctorates in computer science and education. She wrote the first book on Computer Literacy, and as a professor implemented the first computer science program at Hollins University. She became an EdTech investor and was later hired to teach at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education and created its Education Technology Masters program and the incubator EDSi. Today she is still working as a consultant, angel investing and teaching entrepreneurship and innovation.

Sue Talley
"The Seller"

Sue was a key leader in the education division at Apple, just as Apple II's were beginning to become dominant in K-12 education. Her titles were too numerous to even have business cards! Her efforts kept the lights on as the company grew in the 80s and 90s. Sue was at the center of Apple's pivot from the Apple II line to the Macintosh. She too was a teacher at the start of her career. One of the first to realize how computers could be used for more than just math, she encouraged her English students to take advantage of the new technology. When her husband died, Sue went back to school and created the first online doctorate program in Education at Pepperdine. Her pioneering work led to a boom in online education, which was instrumental in helping us to get through the pandemic.

Susan Harman
"The Investment Banker"

In 1968 after high school Susan joined Black & Decker as a secretary and went to college at night. She was promoted to financial analyst and then manager of their marketing and sales information systems. In 1976 when B&D refused to consider her for a position in their all-male sales force, she applied to Stanford and Harvard Business Schools and was accepted at both. She chose Stanford, making her the first professional cheerleader (for the Baltimore Colts) to earn a Stanford MBA. She became the first woman elected Partner at legendary Silicon Valley investment bank Robertson & Stephens in 1984. In the 90's she launched their EdTech investment banking practice initiated with the first Interactive Education conference showcasing innovators to private and venture investors interested in this emerging market.

The Women

Dr. Jenny House
"The Teachers' Teacher"

As the administrator of the Cupertino Unified School District in the heart of Silicon Valley, Jenny and her colleague Bobbi Goodson wrote the first K-8 Computer Literacy curriculum. Steve Jobs ran into her office (unannounced) begging her to pilot Apple's latest products. She did end up working for Steve, but first ran Hewlett Packard's Just-in-Time education strategy for R&D and marketing managers across the country who had no time to go back to school to learn how to integrate new technologies into their business. At HP she fell in love with her 3rd husband, Chuck House, HP's Head of Technology. The bar was set low for Chuck as Jenny's second husband had ties to the mafia— who hasn't had guns pointed at them in the middle of the night?

Dr. Karen Billings
"The Historian"

Karen taught high school math and wrote the first books on how to use calculators and computers. She went into publishing and built Houghton Mifflin's Instructional Computing Department. She then led Logo Computer Systems in the US to launch products for Seymour Papert, the father of the Logo programming language. She was recruited to run Education Marketing programs for Claris Corporation (Apple) and then by Microsoft to support Bill Gates' initiative to compete in the education market by managing K-12 Strategic Relations. Wanting to have a greater impact, she moved to DC to run the Education Division for the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA) and raised the profile of the entire EdTech industry. She keeps the records.

Deb deVries
"The Marketer"

Deb led successful sales and marketing teams contributing to skyrocketing sales for iconic EdTech software programs like Oregon Trail, Dan Buettner's Africa Quest/ Maya Quest/Amazon Trail, Word and Number Munchers, American Girl Software, MathKeys/Houghton Mifflin, Skillstutor, NetSchools. Thanks to Deb and many other incredibly talented people, innovative EdTech made its way into every classroom in America. She worked for years with Kathy Hurley, as "the best lieutenant ever." Known as the party girls of the group, they could hold their own drinking with their male colleagues at software conferences, while showing up bright-eyed for meetings the next day.

“An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people.”

Thomas Jefferson

Why now?

These women were at the forefront of a movement that merged education, technology, and social impact long before STEM had an acronym and yet their legacy remains largely unrecognized.

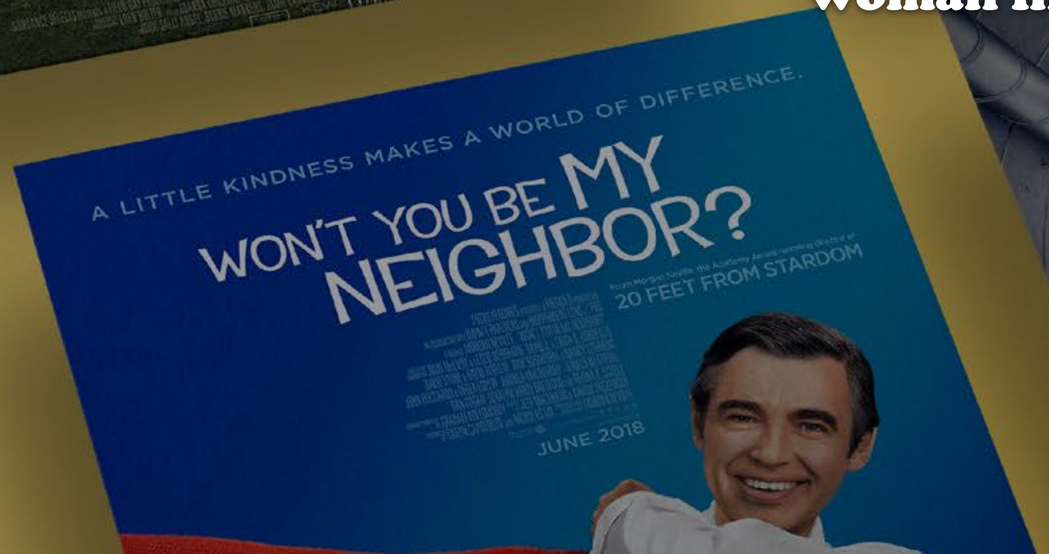
The current administration is dismantling the Department of Education, putting public education—and the values it was built on—under direct threat. At the same time, AI is reshaping the classroom at an unprecedented pace, with women and teacher once again underrepresented in the conversation.

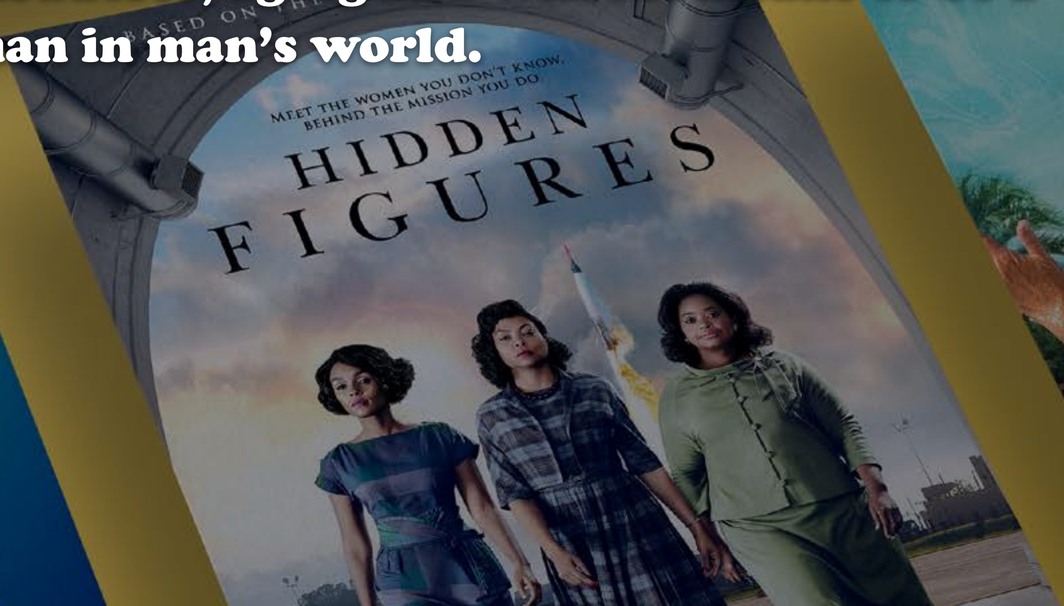
This film reminds us of what's possible when women build the future of learning—not just code or curriculum, but community. Their story challenges the myth that innovation only happens in Silicon Valley garages. It happened in school districts, hotel bars, and on late-night phone trees—by women working together, against the odds.

As we navigate a murky future for education, this film offers a joyful and timely reflection on how far we've come and insight into the work that still lies ahead.

Comps

Playful, heartwarming and informative, this film is a compelling historical adventure set in the world of the early personal computing wars, and a lighthearted exploration of friendship, camaraderie, aging and what it means to be a woman in man's world.





Audience

Inspirational, aspirational, sincere and hilarious, these women upend our expectations, and defy the grandma stereotype.

The Boomer Generation tunes in to see themselves reflected in content like Thursday Murder Club, Only Murders in the Building, The Book Club and A Man on the Inside.

And Millennials and Gen Xers who grew up going to the “computer lab,” are now parents, teachers, and tech founders eager for the nostalgia of their childhood. They’re watching shows like Stranger Things, The Movies that Made Us, and The Goldbergs.

In these uncertain political times, these women remind us that if we roll up our sleeves and work together, we can have a lasting impact... and laugh along the way.

Additional characters

Throughout their careers, our ladies worked with/for a lot of heavy hitters whose interviews will provide context throughout the film.

- **Ben Affleck** - Child star of Voyage of the Mimi, an early EdTech game developed by Marge
- **Dan Buettner** - Author of the Blue Zones developed early EdTech games with Deb and Kathy
- **President Bill Clinton** - Hired Linda to run the first Office of Educational Technology
- **Scott Cook** - Founder of Intuit hired Jenny as employee number five
- **Larry Ellison** - CEO of Oracle worked with Bobbi
- **Bill Gates** - Karen worked with him to support the K-12 division at Microsoft
- **VP Al Gore** - Worked with Linda to pass the Telecomunications act
- **Orrin Hatch** - US Senator who worked with Linda to get bi-partisan education policy passed
- **Trip Hawkins** - Founder of Electronic Arts worked with Bobbi
- **Chuck House** - Early VP of Engineering at HP and Jenny's 3rd husband
- **Jessica Lindell** - Managing DIrector Pearson Virtual Schools and Bobbi's mentee
- **George Lucas** - Colleague of Linda and Bobbi
- **Scott McNealy** - Billionaire Founder of Sun Microsystems who hired Bobbi to run an open source curriculum company
- **Kevin O'Leary** (aka Mr. Wonderful) - Kathy and Deb worked with him at The Learning Company leading to his first billion dollar deal
- **Laurene Powell-Jobs** - Widow of Apple Founder Steve Jobs
- **TJ Rodgers** - Founding CEO of Cypress Semiconductor and got Susan her start as the leader in the tech investment space
- **Esther Wojcicki**- Journalist, educator and vice chair of the Creative Commons advisory council. It was her garage Google started in.
- **MacKenzie Scott** - Marge is currently working with her on an AI platform
- **Brad Smith** - Former CEO of Intuit worked with Jenny
- **Steve Wozniak** - Co-Founder of Apple
- **Will Wright -** Co-Founder of Maxis (*The Sims, Sim City)* worked with Bobbi

An award-winning documentary filmmaker for over twenty years, Sarah has worked as a writer and Story Producer on several high-profile films, and as a lead Producer she has spent years learning the craft from many creative luminaries. She was most recently the Producer of Kiss the Future, a documentary highlighting the underground art and music scene during the siege of Sarajevo, alongside Matt Damon and Ben Affleck.

Sarah was the Story Producer for director Lawrence Kasdan on the six-part Disney series Light and Magic, with Imagine and Lucas films. She was the Story Producer on the top ten Netflix series Heist for Dirty Robber, and Producer on the Netflix documentary Bikram: Yogi, Guru, Predator. She was the line producer and lead Producer on the Grammy-winning HBO documentary series, The Defiant Ones, and on the Emmy-nominated The Price of Free (formerly titled Kailash), a documentary about child slavery which won the 2018 Sundance Festival Grand Jury Prize. She was the Consulting Producer for Making a Murderer Season 2 for Netflix.

Originally from Vancouver, Canada, Sarah spent the majority of her childhood in West Virginia. She began her documentary career in London, and over the past two decades she has worked around the world, touching upon some of the key stories of our time.

She seeks to make films that are as relevant as they are entertaining.

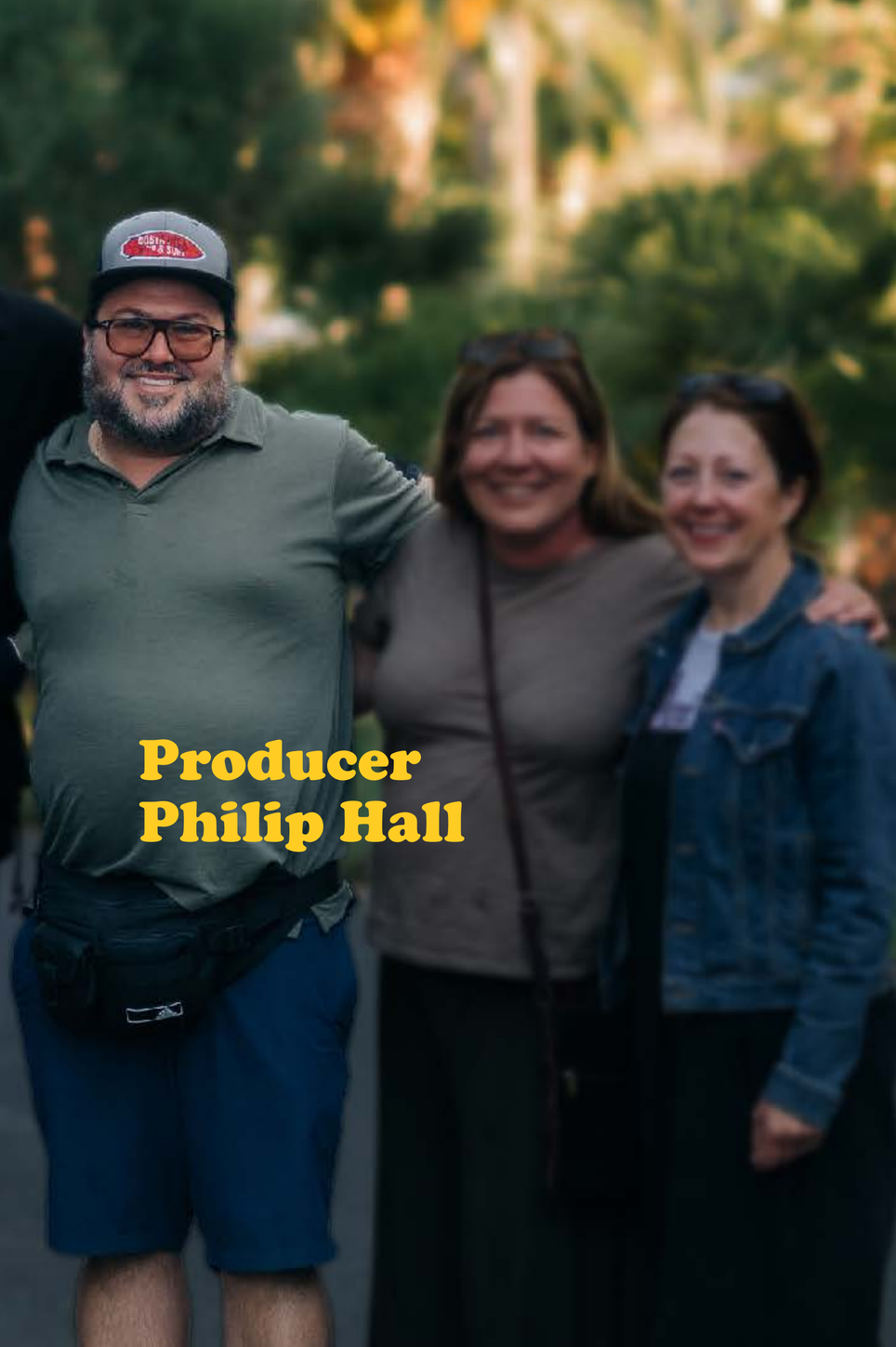
Director
Sarah Anthony

Casey began her career producing documentaries on the history of Hip Hop for Quincy D. Jones' III's QD3 Entertainment, including the seminal documentary on the history of break-dancing, The Freshest Kids (2002); the platinum selling Tupac Shakur documentary, Thug Angel (2002); and the critically acclaimed BEEF (2003) and BEEF II (2004), exploring the evolution of MC battles from verbal one-upmanship to street warfare. Casey directed and produced the documentary Rock The Bells, a behind-the-scenes look at how a young concert promoter beat the odds to reunite the Wu-Tang Clan for their final performance with O.D.B. Casey also directed and produced The Animal People — a feature documentary for Executive Producer Joaquin Phoenix about precedent-setting terrorism charges brought against an activist organization by the United States Government. Casey also directed MAKE/SHIFT — a CLIO and Webby award-winning documentary about marketing in the digital age.

Currently, Casey works in development for September Club, an award-winning documentary production company whose work spans years of excellent trend-setting documentary filmmaking from director Chris Smith's 1999 classic American Movie to director Ethan Hawke's recent acclaimed documentaries The Last Movie Stars and Merle Haggard's HWY 99.

Former film and TV executive turned writer-producer and the co-founder of Grandma Shirley Productions. His credits include the ensemble romantic comedy IT'S NOT YOU for Awesomeness/Paramount, adapted from NYT/"Modern Love" columnist Sara Eckel's novel with Kate Sullivan (Hulu's "We Were The Lucky Ones") attached to direct and Abby Ex (HBO's "Raised by Wolves", "All the Single Ladies") to produce; the all female action-comedy franchise RICH BITCHES with producers Tamara Chestna (SOMETHING FROM TIFFANY'S, MOXIE, AFTER) and Mark Ross (FIVE FEET APART, ISN'T IT ROMANTIC) and Anna Mastro (SECRET SOCIETY OF SECOND BORN ROYALS, RUNAWAYS) attached to direct. His queer family comedy GUNCLE WEEKEND won first place in the Screencraft Comedy Screenplay Competition judged by Point Grey, Happy Madison and Mitch Hurwitz and his TV pilot "The Yenta Squad" was a Sundance Episodic Lab Finalist and PAGE Awards Semi-Finalist.

A UCLA graduate, Hall also has extensive experience in the industry, having worked in feature development with Karen Rosenfelt (THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA), Donald DeLine (I LOVE YOU MAN) and Dan Halsted (GARDEN STATE, SWAT).



Producer
Philip Hall

Esther Wojcicki is a globally recognized educator, journalist, and bestselling author renowned as the pioneer of the “Moonshots in Education” movement. As the founder of the groundbreaking Media Arts Program at Palo Alto High School, she built one of the nation’s largest and most decorated scholastic journalism initiatives, transforming thousands of students into confident, independent thinkers. Often celebrated as the “Godmother of Silicon Valley” and author of the acclaimed bestseller How to Raise Successful People, Esther champions the TRICK philosophy—Trust, Respect, Independence, Collaboration, and Kindness.

Beyond the classroom, she has served as a senior consultant to the U.S. Department of Education, advised organizations such as Google and the United Nations, and founded the Global Resource Alliance for the Digital Age to scale inquiry-based, student-directed learning worldwide.

Oh, and Google was created in her garage.

Thank you!