As the applause faded, Amy Lillard clicked her microphone off and smiled broadly at the audience. With fellow panelists, Chris Swenson and Kate Becker, she gathered for a photo to commemorate the kick-off of the 2019 Seattle Film Summit. The crowd buzzed lightly; Saturday morning coffee slowly making its way.

Directly in front of Amy, a peculiar line of people formed. A polished reporter and her crew, a high school film producer, a voice actor with scruffy hair and worn jeans, and multiple screenwriters; all creatives relating somehow to the up and coming Seattle film scene. Amy took care to speak briefly with everyone. Her parting words were always, “let me introduce you to”… or “let me take your information so we can follow up.” As Amy spoke with everyone, the line grew longer, but she never rushed and gave each person her undivided attention.

Amy Lillard is the Washington State Film Commissioner and Executive Director of Washington Filmworks. She’s also a Seattleite, wife and mother. While we spoke, Amy paused for a moment to check a text message from her husband regarding her kids at home. She was having an exciting day at work. Only a few minutes earlier, during the event keynote, Dow Constantine, the King County representative had just pledged to champion the growing local film region by creating a Creative Economy Initiative. State Senator Lisa Wellman then stood up from the audience and pledged to fully back the new initiative and future endeavors in the film industry, saying “bring me a business plan!” The crowd of 100 went wild.

To some, Amy is a local celebrity, a champion with the power and connections to help them reach their dreams of breaking into the film industry. While her appearance skews closer to favorite aunt than Hollywood shark, she’s earned every bit of the reverence. In a 2015 she worked for the passage of Senate Bill 6027, which extended and increased the Motion Picture Competitiveness Program. Under Amy’s leadership, Washington Filmworks helped over 120 film projects complete principal photography, which have brought an estimated 255 Million dollars to the statewide economy. Amy said, “I can’t stand in front of a camera or design a production. But I can create an environment where creative people can succeed.”

The Seattle Film trifecta includes Amy, Chris, who manages the permitting at Seattle’s office of film and music, and Kate, the creative economy strategist for King County. All Hollywood veterans, dedicated to advocating and influencing increased King County, government spending with the intention of boosting the local economy.

Amy’s path to Seattle was winding, but true, guided by her core value of **always aligning her passion with purpose**. By following her passion for film and storytelling, she took care to explore her interests while directly supporting the business side. She was able to be less prescriptive and driven by goals, which led to lobbying her local government for additional spending in the arts, which in turn, led to increased economic growth. We didn’t have enough time to talk, but I was able to learn more about Amy through online research.

Lillard learned to take on the impossible early on. She grew up in Tustin, Calif. where her father, “a mad scientist entrepreneur” started a pharmaceutical-manufacturing company, determined to find a cure for cancer. “It was an environment where you shoot for the moon,” she said, “where anything was possible.” It explains why her brother, Matthew, pursued acting. And succeeded. He’s been in “Scream” and “Scooby-Doo” films.

Amy Lillard started her career as an independent film publicist out of New York and Los Angeles designing the release campaigns for groundbreaking films such as “The Blair Witch Project,” “American Psycho” and “Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels.” Amy retired from publicity in 2000 and took a trip around the world. Two years and 42 countries later, she settled in Seattle where she has worked in various capacities including, director of publicity and promotion at SIFF, festival director of the Reel Cinerama Film Festival, and producer of the Fly Filmmaking Challenge. <https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/movies/amy-lillard-wants-action-on-washington-state-film-tax-incentives/>

As we finished talking, the Seattle Film Summit event director inched closer to pull Amy away. With an unprecedented 660 registered attendees for this event, they had more speakers to greet and the momentum of an exciting morning to maintain. Ever the “connector,” we parted with Amy’s generous offer to communicate via email regarding available intern or contract positions at Washington Filmworks.