

Greene County More Ready Than Ever for Film, TV Productions

Often the best time to stoke the flames is when a fire is burning hot.

That's exactly what the State of Georgia and Greene County are doing with the state's Camera Ready program. Greene County just recently joined 142 other communities across the Peach State in earning this special designation by the Georgia Film, Music, and Digital Entertainment Office since October 2010. Being named Camera Ready means we have a program in place that provides film and television production companies with easier, faster, and better access to local resources and location information.

Why is this important? The 2012 fiscal year saw record investment in the state by the entertainment industry, with more than \$879.8 million in direct spending, according to the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

As many communities have also experienced, films and television programs can drive increased tourism inspired by the successes of the local production. For example, the church built as a set for the Disney project, "The Last Song" is now an event facility in Tybee Island. And the Whistle Stop Café from "Fried Green Tomatoes" put Juliette on the map. Or putting us closer to home, just about 20 miles down the road; Crawfordville has been on the film industry map for years, as 8 to 10 movies have been filmed there. This has created revenue for property owners and local residents as extras and stage hands.

Producers love Georgia for our diverse settings, talented workforce and tax incentives. Since it was created in 2005, the Georgia Entertainment Industry Investment Act has helped generate unprecedented direct investment in our state. In fact, economic impact from productions in Georgia amounted to approximately \$3.1 billion. Today, we're one of the top five production destinations in the country.

More than 30,000 Georgians are now employed in the entertainment industry, and numbers are only expected to grow. The local economic impact from productions can be significant, including hiring of local residents, hotel stays and purchases of goods and services.

While Georgia has done an effective job selling itself to production companies, other states have also worked hard to lure films and television programs. Camera Ready will help to secure that we stay ahead of the competition by meeting the very specific local needs that production companies have.

As the Camera Ready liaison for our community, my job is to be the primary local contact for production companies. That means I help to identify local resources, from locations and hotels to associated businesses, such as caterers and dry cleaners.

There are a wealth of locations, talent and assets in our community that production companies can utilize to everyone's advantage. Camera Ready is one more way we are making sure they do.

Becky Cronic, President of the Greene County Chamber of Commerce, is the county liaison and can be reached at 706-453-7592.