

'Regional cooperation' to lure movies

Work force, facilities key to success

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PLAQUEMINE — Speakers told dozens of people attending a briefing on Louisiana's growing presence in the motion picture industry the key to attracting additional moviemaking to the Baton Rouge area is regional cooperation.

“Cooperation beats competition,” said Linda Thurman, business development president for Emerald Bayou Studios, based in Baton Rouge, during a crash course on the movie industry Wednesday.

In an all-day session organized by the Louisiana Capital Area Film Commission, Thurman and others shared the motion picture basics with an audience of about 90 people.

The region is in the initial stage of the film industry — the pioneering stage — which Thurman compared to the era of the Wild West.

“It is not the gold diggers who get rich, but the people who are selling the hardware, the picks and the shovels,” she said.

Louisiana is in a good position to attract the motion picture industry if a trained workforce and significant facilities, such as modern movie studios, are available, Thurman added.

She said the southern California film industry already has moved through the second stage — expansion — and is operating in the renewal stage. As a result, many moviemakers are looking to move away from the West Coast, Thurman said.

For the film business to continue its growth in and around Baton Rouge, more people in the area need to be knowledgeable, involved and working together, speakers said.

“It is truly a regional industry,” agreed Jamie Mabile Delatte, vice chairwoman of the Capital Area Film Commission.

Cooperation among parishes is crucial to attract productions. Further, a cordial environment is better for the production crews that often travel to other sites and resources.

“That is the most important message I got — teamwork,” said Renee Piper, special events and projects coordinator for the South Louisiana Economic Council. “It is important for us to get information and see how to recruit movies.”

She said the economic council, which represents Assumption, Lafourche, St. Mary and Terrebonne parishes, is considering developing a regional film consortium to actively attract productions.

Another emphasis brought up during the briefing is the need to enable tourism and economic development officials at the parish level to competently recruit moviemakers.

“For years, local economic development and tourism people didn’t have an in-depth knowledge of how the industry works,” said commission Chairman Larry Thomas. “Generally, tourism workers try to accent just a few locations when they should accent the entire parish. Film makers are looking for specific sites.”

As an example, he mentioned “The Dukes of Hazzard,” a movie that was filmed in part in West Feliciana Parish because the makers found a blown-out bridge and a junkyard that suited their needs.

The state’s growing film industry, spurred by tax breaks, potentially could result in an economic boom, Thurman said.

From equipment purchases, local crew employment, lodging, restaurant patronage, and on, the production creates a ripple effect. Every dollar spent during production yields another \$3.50 spent in the community, she said.

The Capital Area Film Commission has eight member-parishes — Ascension, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, West Baton Rouge and West Feliciana.

The group maintains a database of locations, identifying what each parish has to offer to the film industry.

Several recent motion pictures have been shot in capital-area parishes including “The Dukes of Hazzard,” “All the King’s Men,” “Glory Road,” “Eve’s Bayou” and “The Reaping.”

The film industry generated \$640 million during 2005 in Louisiana, compared to \$10 million in the state three years earlier, Thurman said.



Staff photo by
Lauck
downtown Donaldsonville are reflected Wednesday window of the Railroad Café on Railroad Avenue in Baton Rouge-area parishes who deal with the industry are hoping regional cooperation will help Louisiana’s small towns and urban areas as locations for

Making movies

Since Louisiana’s film incentives were passed in 2002, the tax credits have been used in more than 60 movies.

FEATURE MOVIES

- “Ray”
- “Mr. 3000”
- “A Love Song for Bobby Long”
- “Waiting”
- “Evil Remains”
- “Freshman Year”
- “Because of Winn-Dixie”
- “Runaway Jury”
- “Torn Apart”
- “Skeleton Key”
- “Last Holiday”
- “Glory Road”
- “Dreamer”
- “Backwater”
- “Five Fingers”
- “Dukes of Hazzard”
- “Pool Hall Prophets”
- “Getting Lucky”
- “All the King’s Men”
- “Retirement”
- “Failure to Launch”
- “Big Momma’s House 2”
- “Stay Alive”
- “The Last Time”
- “Little Chenier (Bayou)”
- “Bug”
- “Local Color”
- “The Reaping”
- “Lubu”
- “Roadhouse II”
- “Factory Girl”
- “The Guardian”
- “Premonition”
- “Déjà Vu”
- “Match Race”
- “Solstice”
- “Not Like Everyone Else”
- “Mr. Brooks”
- “Deal”
- “PDR”
- “Life is Not a Fairytale”

TV MOVIES

- “Growing Pains Reunion 2”
- “A Twisted Trust”
- “Flood of Fear”
- “Infidelity”
- “Stuck in Suburbs”
- “Pop Rocks”
- “Searching for David’s Heart”
- “Search for the World’s Greatest Kid Magician”
- “Miracle Run”
- “Brooke Ellison”
- “Frankenstein”
- “Dead Will Tell”
- “Thief”
- “Canal Street Brothel”
- “Heartless”
- “Odd Girl Out”
- “Pizza Wars”
- “Elvis”
- “Faith of My Fathers”
- “Campus Confidential”
- “Locusts”
- “Vampire Bats”
- “Snow Wonder”
- “Initiation of Sarah”
- “The Year Without Santa”