

'Shoeless Wonders' movie kicks off

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Residents from Lynchburg, as well as Roanoke and Richmond, came out in droves Wednesday evening to learn about Life Out Loud Film's upcoming film "Shoeless Wonders," which the company plans to film locally in the fall of 2017.

From the 1920's to the 1950's, a team from Lynchburg's Presbyterian Orphans' Home, now known as Human Kind, became known both nationally and internationally for playing the city football league barefoot, earning them the name the Shoeless Wonders.

"Football doesn't care about your economic status," former NFL and Virginia Tech player Jake Grove said to the crowd seated in the Academy Center of the Arts' Warehouse Theatre. "It doesn't care if you're rich or poor. The only things that matter are talent, efforts and, most importantly, teamwork."

The original team became local sensations for their eight-years winning streak, which occurred from 1922 to 1930, during which time the boys remained undefeated.

"Kids, in the 1920's as well as today, they're looking to be a part of something," Grove said. "Being part of a team and working together with people like them is what football is all about and when you get done, it's what the working world is all about."

The Forest-based company turned its attention to the local football team from Presbyterian Orphans' Home, now known as HumanKind, three years ago. Previous projects include "Lake Effects," which plays on the Hallmark channel in more than 30 countries; "Wish You Well," based on the novel by bestselling author David Baldacci; and "Coming Through the Rye," which will enter theaters in September.

"We have an opportunity for all the things we've grown up and loved to be shared with the entire world," said Marjette Upsur, the city's director of economic development as she spoke of the benefits Life Out Loud Film's project could bring to the Lynchburg-area.

Upsur noted in 2014, the production of film and television projects in Virginia had an overall economic impact of \$414 million, with \$230 spent directly within the state. State and local taxes, she said, totaled \$59 million for that year.

During the evening, Sara Elizabeth Timmins, producer and creative director for Life Out Loud Films, discussed how the community could become involved in "Shoeless Wonders."

In addition to opportunities for actors and production crew, members of the community can become involved by partnering with the film company to fill day-to-day services of keeping the project on track, such as accounting and catering. More information on this, she said, will be listed on the film's website and Facebook page.

"We would like to provide some educational opportunities where local high school or college students can get involved," Timmins said in an interview prior to the event. "Whether we do workshops when the professionals are in town, internships, and shadow opportunities, working with Amazement Square to do an installment based around the film."

Timmins could not comment on the particulars of the budget at this time, though she did say the company still is in the fundraising phase and hopes to acquire the remaining amount by November in order to begin production in the fall of 2017.

"I can't wait until 2018 when that is renovated next door," she said, gesturing behind her toward the historic Academy of Music Theatre, "and we have this beautiful theater and do the premier of this film locally."

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