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"Shoeless Wonders": Story of Lynchburg football team to be shared in new film

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By Tim Ciesco, Reporter - [email](#)

LYNCHBURG - For more than a century, the Presbyterian Homes and Family Services campus in Lynchburg has worked to support children. And in all that time, they've had many success stories -- but perhaps none more touching or inspirational than the Shoeless Wonders.

"It's a fantastic story of their persistence, their engagement in the world, and their overcoming a lot of obstacles," said Bob Dendy, President of Presbyterian Homes.

During the 1920's, a group of orphan boys living at the home asked if they could start a football team. Because they didn't have money, they weren't able to afford shoes and had to play barefoot. The Shoeless Wonders, as they were dubbed, then went on to go undefeated and unscored upon for the next eight years.

"From the day that I learned about it, I always felt like it needed a national audience," said Dendy.

Filmmaker Sara Elizabeth Timmins ("Lake Effects", "Wish You Well") felt the same way when she first heard the story -- and approached Presbyterian Homes about making a movie.

"It's not just an inspirational sports story," said Timmins, who created her production company Life Out Loud Films. "A lot of the story is really focusing on the home and life that the boys had -- that band of brothers they developed that led to this winning streak."

Many of the actual Shoeless Wonders are still alive and return yearly to the place they called home when they were kids. As a result, Presbyterian Homes has had the opportunity to record a lot of their memories from their football days -- and they've helped Timmins connect with them.

"It's important to tell the real story and not just go in and Hollywood-ize it, so we've been talking to some of the real players," said Timmins. "And you know, we don't have to make anything up. The stories we're hearing are really fun, honest, rich, and have a lot of heart."

Dendy says he's been impressed with Timmins' passion for this project and feels she's the right person to share this story.

"We're excited," said Dendy. "We have a fantastic mission to serve children and families across the Commonwealth and what better way than a little piece of our history to introduce us again to the world, to broaden the awareness of what we do, and ultimately raise more money for the services and the mission."

Timmins says it's been "fabulous" for her working with Presbyterian Houses.

"And if that's any indication of how it's going to go, we're going to have an amazing film," said Timmins.

The project is currently in the research phase. Timmins says the goal is to have a screenplay started by the end of the year and for filming to begin in 2015.

The makers of "Lake Effects" and "Wish You Well" have just announced their latest film project which will be based on the true story of a Lynchburg football team.

Producers are currently in the research phase of the project, which has a working title of "Shoeless Wonders." It follows the lives of a group of orphan boys living at the real-life Presbyterian Home and Family Services campus back in the 1920s who wanted to play football -- but due to a lack of money had to play without shoes. The team went on to go undefeated for the next eight years.

Tonight on WSLs 10 at 5, we sit down with the Executive Producer of the film to learn more about her vision for the film and why she and the home feel it's a story that needs to be told.



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