

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

IOWA ARTS COUNCIL
PRODUCE IOWA
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

PRODUCE IOWA
STATE OFFICE OF FILM & MEDIA

Season's Greetings,

The year is almost over so before we fast-forward into 2023, let's pause for our annual spotlight on just a few industry highlights around the state. It was quite a rollercoaster ride with lots of dramatic twists and turns, but I think you'll agree that, in the end, it's been a great ride for independent filmmaking in Iowa.



◀◀ Rewind

Produce Iowa, the Iowa Arts Council and Iowa PBS kicked off the year with our premiere of the sixth season of "The Film Lounge." For the first time, we were on prime time to reach new audiences, and we celebrated by hosting a virtual-lounge viewing party and live Facebook chat with the featured Iowa filmmakers. Congratulations to all the talented filmmakers whose short stories we helped elevate. If you didn't catch the two one-hour episodes on television, you can always [screen them online](#).



In March we kicked off the **Iowa Film Festival** season and were pleased to see the **Oneota Film Festival** took place entirely in downtown Decorah for the first time. We're proud of the festival staff, board and community for making the big move and supporting this cultural and economic attraction. We've been told that every single venue signed up on the spot for next year, so make a note to join them March 2-5.

In May we learned of NBCUniversal's decision to film a new digital series in Iowa based on the "Field of Dreams." By the end of June, however, we also learned the production was placed on pause. I wasn't ready for that loop-the-loop! But the silver lining is that our office partnered with **NBCUniversal** for a special two-day **P.A. Boot Camp** to train 30 Iowans to the next level in movie studio productions. It was an amazing learning experience and an opportunity I wish I'd had myself back in the day!

GREENLIGHT GRANT

The year's ride continued to climb in July when the fourth round of Greenlight Grants was officially announced. Congratulations to **Chris Filippone of Iowa City** along with **Antoinette Laval** and **Spencer Smith, both of Des Moines**. We look forward to seeing the work of these three talented Iowa filmmakers. As always, my thanks go to the Iowa Arts Council for administering these funds on our behalf.

Other high points continued in late summer when **Scott Siepker** and his Greenlight Grant-project, "**Kinnick: The Documentary**," enjoyed a theatrical run at every Fridley Theatre across Iowa – and then some. He even traveled to the Nile C. Kinnick High School at the **Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan** to screen the film to more than 600 people. If you haven't seen it yet on the big screen, keep an eye out for special events or stream it on **Vimeo, Amazon or Apple TV**. And just in time for the holidays: Check out an [HD Blu-ray/DVD 2-disc combo](#) for that hard-to-buy-for person on your list.

Even though it wasn't shot in Iowa, I'll forgive them this time and applaud **Iowa City filmmakers Tommy Haines and Andrew Sherburne** for their "**Hockeyland**" documentary. It's a coming-of-age story about Minnesota's unforgiving North Country and some rival high school seniors' last year on the ice. Besides being **the No. 1 streaming documentary in America**, it was nominated for the **Critics Choice Award for Best Sports Documentary**. "Citizen Ashe" and "Welcome to Wrexham" tied for the win, but we're still proud of our Iowa filmmaking team and the company they keep!

Another gift idea: This film, too, is available on [Blu-Ray](#) with some [fun merch](#) for hockey fans.



In November we wrapped up the second class in our three-part MediaMasters professional development series. The workshops take Iowans through the step-by-step process of **developing their stories and business plans** – essentially, what every filmmaker needs to master. My thanks to **EJ Philby Burton** for all her hard work overseeing the classes and for helping to host our annual **Iowa Film Festival Summit** last month with executive directors across the state. We always look forward to connecting with them to share best practices from each festival season, which helps them prepare for the following year. Speaking of 2023, best of luck to our newest member festival,

Farm to Film Fest, which will debut May 20-21 in **Washington, Iowa!**



As my rollercoaster car eases back into the station, please take note of a few coming attractions:

Scott Beck and **Bryan Woods** of "**A Quiet Place**" fame plan to open their new \$3.7 million movie theater this spring in the Quad Cities. The Bettendorf natives are transforming a vacant building in downtown Davenport that will enlighten, entertain and engage new audiences and bring together their community.

After five years and \$5 million dollars, the **Varsity Cinema** is a welcome addition to the Drake neighborhood as it brings more movies to Des Moines. Congrats to **Ben Godar and his team**.

Finally, our office is starting a new project called **ScreenIowa**, a curated network of Iowa movie theaters that screen independent films and engage filmmakers in their communities. If you have an Iowa film you'd like to see, let us know and we'll be happy to make the connection.

We find that as we continue to create more content here in Iowa, more filmmakers want to share their stories on the big screen and more Iowans want to learn the stories behind the scenes – a sustainable creative economy, indeed.

Cheers to a new ride in 2023. May we have fewer bumps and even more climbs!

Cheers!

Liz Gilman

Film Commissioner, Produce Iowa – State Office of Film & Media

One last thing: You may have noticed in our new logo up top that we're bringing back the word "film" into Produce Iowa's official name -- and tweaking my official title. This aligns with industry terminology as I facilitate an increase in requests from producers who want to visit Iowa, hire Iowans and spend money here on productions.