

July 25, 2012

## **Film industry generates local dollars**

Santa Clarita captured 26 percent of the state's incented film projects, while bringing in \$12.1 mil

Three, two, one, action. And the cameras roll on any number of on-location television features filmed in Santa Clarita on any given day of the week.

Santa Clarita has always been home to some of television's most-watched series such as "CSI," "NCIS" and "Big Love."

Since 2009, 33 percent of the 18 state-approved TV series have based their productions in Santa Clarita, giving a big boost to the local economy, city officials said.

Those series include some of the newest hits, like: ABC Family's "Huge," "Jane by Design" and "Switched at Birth"; FX's "Justified"; TBS' "The Wedding Band"; and TNT's "Franklin & Bash."

In addition to qualifying for California's tax credit, Santa Clarita offers its own Film Incentive Program, launched in 2009, which provides reduced and refunded permit fees for productions that qualify under the state program.

"The state tax credit and our own local Film Incentive Program have made it easier for film productions to base in California," said Russell Sypowicz, who oversees the Santa Clarita Film Office.

In 2011 alone, the city recorded 437 film days for TV, almost half of the year's total 901 film days. This represents an estimated economic impact of \$13.1 million to the local Santa Clarita economy from just TV productions alone — making it the largest segment of filming for the year.

### **ABC Family**

Rob Dohan, location manager for several ABC Family television shows including "Jane by Design" and "Switched at Birth," is pleased to work in the area and said the incentives, combined with the area's film-friendly residents and businesses, make Santa Clarita one of the best places to film.

"I've been in the location business for 25 years and I can say Santa Clarita is the most film-friendly city when it comes to its Film Office, businesses and residents," Dohan said.

"ABC Family films several shows in the area and we really appreciate how smooth everything operates in the community," he said.

The network's partnership with Hart High School was critical to ABC Family keeping the show "Jane by Design" in Santa Clarita, Dohan said.

"We ended up filming at the school nine times throughout the year and had that not been possible, we would have based elsewhere."

While education will always be the William S. Hart Union High School District's priority, Gail Pinsker, community liaison officer for the district, said that when the district can make filming and education both happen without disrupting one another, it's a win-win situation.

The district's many looks and available sites, as well as location in the entertainment industry's 30-mile zone, make it a top choice for filming, she said.

"In this time of reduced budgets from the state, filming is another revenue source for the district that enables us to continue our high-quality programs for our students," Pinsker said.

Mindful that its top priority is educating area students, the school district encourages filming during off-school hours, weekends or holiday breaks, or in limited sections of the school, she said.

The attitude of the school district is something Dohan said he sees daily. He also said he enjoys working with entities big and small, such as Hyatt Regency and Fennel Restorations, which are companies that aren't in the film business per se, but make filming work for their companies and the community.

### **Incentive at work**

From 2009 through 2011, 157 projects were approved under the state's program to receive tax credits for filming and basing in California.

Of those 157 projects at least 41 projects, or 26 percent, were filmed in Santa Clarita, said Jessica Jackson, a city spokeswoman. The projects included feature films such as "Bad Teacher," "Bridesmaids," "Drive," "Faster," "The Gangster Squad" and "Jackass 3-D," according to the Santa Clarita Film Office.

In its last fiscal year the Film Office recorded an 8-percent increase in film permits and a 4-percent increase in film days over the prior year, which represents 327 permits and 909 location film days.

Santa Clarita businesses benefited from an estimated \$21.1 million as a result of location filming, hitting figures last recorded in fiscal year 2009, city officials said.

In March, the City Council approved a three-year extension of the city's Film Incentive Program. And in November 2011, it approved a new Movie Ranch Overlay Zone to include projects filmed at local movie ranches as well.