

Bartow designated Camera Ready

by Marie Nesmith
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On Wednesday, Bartow joined 111 of the 159 counties in Georgia that have the designation of Camera Ready. Bartow received the distinction -- along with 22 other newly inducted counties -- from Gov. Nathan Deal and the Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office at the annual Governor's Tourism Conference.

According to a news release from the Georgia Department of Economic Development, "Camera Ready was put in place by the state to offer film and television production companies access to local resources and information. The program is a special designation given to participating Georgia communities interested in attracting entertainment productions. Local economic impact from productions can be significant, including hiring of local residents, hotel stays and purchases of goods and services. ... The 2008 Georgia Entertainment Industry Investment Act helped the state's entertainment industry achieve record numbers.

"Georgia is now among the top five states in the nation for film and TV production with more than 327 productions shot in Georgia from July 2010 through June 2011, bringing in more than \$683.5 million in investment to Georgia. These projects have generated an economic impact of \$2.4 billion. Georgia-filmed movies slated to hit theatres in the coming months include a remake of 'Footloose' on Oct. 14 and 'Wanderlust' starring Jennifer Aniston and Paul Rudd on Feb. 24, 2012. Georgia can also be seen on television sets across the world with multiple television series now calling Georgia home. Season three of the CW's 'Vampire Diaries' [premiered] on Sept. 15 and AMC's record-breaking 'The Walking Dead' returns on Oct. 16."

For Ellen Archer, who will serve as Bartow's Camera Ready liaison, the distinction will aid in the county's ongoing relationship with the entertainment industry.

"It just puts us in a little easier position to attract film, video, commercial [projects]. Because when people go to the state's website -- scouts or [whomever] -- they will immediately see that we want them here," said Archer, executive director for the Cartersville-Bartow County Convention & Visitors Bureau, referring to infrastructure being in place to support a production. "That's what it amounts to, that there will be people standing ready to help with their scouts or if it's arrange caterers or if it's to get hotel rooms or if it's to find a vendor such as lumber [suppliers], because quite often

they build things on site.

"We have a history of working with the [state] film department [but this will] increase our chances with those people who don't first call the film department but perhaps go to their website. That would be the difference."

Throughout the years, Bartow has served as a backdrop for many films and TV shows, such as "Mosquito Coast" and "I'll Fly Away." One of the most recent productions to be filmed in the county was 20th Century Fox's "The Three Stooges."

Known as the Ryals-Davis Home, the pre-Civil War homeplace at 900 Old Alabama Road in Cartersville serves as an orphanage in the film, which is set for release in 2012. Directed by brothers Bobby and Peter Farrelly, the movie highlights the slapstick antics of Curly, Moe and Larry, portrayed by Will Sasso, Chris Diamantopoulos and Sean Hayes, respectively.

Situated on 300 acres, the home was built in the late 1850s by the Ryals family. According to Lehmann Smith, who is one of the property's managers, the home was spared during the Civil War because Union soldiers used the structure as a small hospital. Now restored, the home is no stranger to the film industry. Along with being featured in "The Three Stooges," it also has been utilized for the Steve Martin movie "A Simple Twist of Fate" and various made-for-TV films.

Along with having historical buildings, like the Ryals-Davis Home, Archer believes Bartow's terrain and proximity to Atlanta appeals to the entertainment industry. For Archer, the ideal situation would be for an iconic film to use Bartow County as its setting, thus spurring nationwide tourism for this area.

"Everybody wants to be Juliette, Ga., and have 'Fried Green Tomatoes,' which brings you residual tourism for 15 years after the film was released," she said, adding "while that's the grand prize," even lower budget films will bring a sizable boost to the local economy. "For example, I was talking to an agent a couple of weeks ago. It was strangely enough looking between Bartow County's various communities and Natchez, Miss. And it was a low budget film but even for a low budget film it was an approximate \$500,000 local spend. So they had budgeted for local on-site filming costs \$500,000 and that's a low-budget film."