



Lights, Camera, Action



Film and television production on campus and in Holland this summer provided unique behind-the-scenes perspective and learning opportunities for students in a variety of disciplines. The campus and area stood in for the World War II-

era Netherlands during the filming of the *Return to the Hiding Place*. Extras cast for the production, pictured on the set with Graves Hall in the background, included junior Rebekah Taylor, senior Jackie Richards and Alex Martin '10.

It might have been a typical afternoon on the Hope campus, with groups of students outside Graves Hall making their way to and fro' the other destinations of the day.

It might have been, except for the decidedly retro fashions, the unlikely presence of World War II-era German soldiers, and the film crew just a few steps away. Instead, during that most *unique* afternoon in July, Hope represented a site not in Holland, Mich., but in the original Holland, and more than six decades in the past.

The college provided locations for the independent film *Return to the Hiding Place*, which tells the story of Dutch students who risked their lives to save Jews during World War II. The title is a reference to the home of the ten Boom family, who sheltered Jews from the Nazis during the war. Corrie ten Boom, who wrote the book *The Hiding Place*, is portrayed as a character in the film.

The activity was part of a busy summer for both Hope and West Michigan in hosting a variety of television and film productions. The filming leant a bit of Hollywood excitement to the nation's Midwest west coast, and for Hope students provided some singular hands-on learning opportunities as well.

For the college, the activity began in May with the return of Grand Rapids, Mich.-based Enthusiastic Productions, which had previously spent time on campus from 2006 to 2008 filming the award-winning children's television program *Come On Over!* The production company was back this year to film *Noodle and Doodle*, a new television series for preschoolers and their families that debuted on the Sprout network in September.

Upon learning that Sprout was planning a new children's show, Theresa Thome, president of Enthusiastic Productions, immediately recommended West Michigan, not least of all because of her company's very positive

experiences at Hope, which included not only the outstanding studio in the Martha Miller Center for Global Communication but a friendly and helpful campus community.

"I don't think there's a better place to produce something like this," Thome said. "The campus is incredibly conducive to production."

Involving students in the process, she noted, was a major bonus, both because they bring "a great energy" to their work and because education is a priority for Enthusiastic Productions beyond what appears on-screen.

"The process that you're going through is equally important to or more important than the product. It's important to us that the process involve learning," Thome said. "We're thrilled to be giving students the opportunity to learn, whether or not they want to pursue a career in television or film."

Not unlike a college campus, a television or film production is something of a community of its own, requiring a variety of services and skill sets. For students, that meant a range of opportunities to get involved, from working with props; to assisting the program's food stylist; to serving as a "kid wrangler," helping and entertaining the preschoolers in the cast between takes.

And they stayed busy doing it.

"Production is one of the most intense work experiences that you can give to somebody in college or just getting out," said Thome, who noted that Enthusiastic Productions completed 26 shows in 27 days.

Senior communication major Brooke Henderson of Wheaton, Ill., signed on as a production assistant as career exploration. "My goal for the summer was to get an internship or something in the field of communication, to see if I liked it or not," she said.

Her verdict? "I like how fast-paced production is," she said. "And I'm never doing the same thing."

Junior art major Andrew Gras of Holland,

"Were thrilled to be giving students the opportunity to learn, whether or not they want to pursue a career in television or film."

– Theresa Thome, President, Enthusiastic Productions

Mich., who worked as a grip (a crewmember who helps set up equipment), found his experience a good complement to other career-oriented experiences that he's pursued.

"I'd like to go to graduate school for lighting design specifically, so it's one of the steps toward that," Gras said. "It's been a good learning experience doing something new, and learning a different area of television."

History and religion major Jake Paarlberg, a senior from Lynwood, Ill., who also worked as a grip, plans to teach at the high school level, but likewise valued the chance to learn.

"I've always been interested in television and film and such, and thought it'd be an interesting experience—and it certainly has been," he said. "Just seeing how stuff like this is done and the amount of work involved for a minute of film is unbelievable."

Return to the Hiding Place came to Hope only a few short weeks after *Noodle and Doodle* wrapped—and was drawn, as was the television show, because of previous experience. The film, scheduled for release in 2011, is being co-produced by Manistee, Mich.-based 10 West Studios, whose president is Matt Tailford '97. From his student days, he remembered the Holland community and campus as well-suited to standing in for Dutch locations.

"Knowing what Hope and Holland offered from a Dutch architectural standpoint, it was really my starting point," he said. "It was a great opportunity to bring Hope into the mix."

In addition to campus locations like the chapel, Graves Hall and Voorhees Hall, filming included community sites such as Centennial Park, Windmill Island and the Felt Mansion in Laketown Township southwest of town. Shooting is also taking place in the Netherlands, Texas and Manistee.

Beyond familiar Hope locales, the film will also include members of the Hope community, with students and recent graduates among those who answered the call for extras.

For chemistry major and pre-medical student Rebekah Taylor, a junior from Zeeland, Mich., who had been working on campus, the film provided a once-in-a-lifetime way to wrap up the summer.

"I had finished working this summer at Upward Bound as an office assistant," she said. "It seemed like something interesting to do."

Senior Jackie Richards of Worthington, Ohio, and Alex Martin '10 of Fort Wayne, Ind., both signed on as a way of gaining career-related experience. Both also worked with Hope Summer Repertory Theatre (HSRT) this year and are hoping to pursue careers in theatre.

"It's incredibly beneficial for our careers

to have these experiences and opportunities," Martin said.

"This has been my first experience working with a film," he said. "I've learned a lot."

Richards, who had worked as an extra before, noted that she enjoyed seeing how many people are involved in creating a film and also the process itself, with multiple takes behind getting each moment just right. "We'll do the same thing, only it'll be from a different angle throughout," she said.

She appreciated the work as a complement to her time with HSRT, which itself gathers theatre professionals from around the world and provides a living learning experience for the students who work with the program. "It's a really great group that gets together—very talented," she said.

Grateful for the college's accommodation as host, Tailford, like Thome earlier in the summer, valued the chance for students to get involved.

"It was my hope that it could be that kind of reciprocal relationship," he said.

"We definitely want to present those kinds of opportunities," Tailford said. "To be able to come back and offer students that kind of thing is pretty cool." 🐦

(Editor's Note: Links to additional information about both Noodle and Doodle and Return to the Hiding Place, as well as a gallery of photos taken while Return to the Hiding Place filmed at Hope, are available on the college's website.

More ONLINE www.hope.edu/pr/nfnc



Filming a scene for *Return to the Hiding Place* in the Pine Grove. The film, scheduled for release in 2011, is being co-produced by 10 West Studios, whose president is Matt Tailford '97.



Senior Brooke Henderson worked as a production assistant with the television program *Noodle and Doodle* as it filmed on campus and in Holland this summer, an internship that helped her explore options in her chosen field of communication.

