



Student filmmaker brings project home

BY MICHAEL ARMSTRONG

STAFF WRITER



New filmmakers making films on a tight budget often get creative. Some max out their credit cards, hoping the film will win awards at Sundance or other film festivals. Others get arts grants. Almost all recruit family and friends to help out. Katherine Brennan, a 2005 Homer High School graduate in her senior year at the Academy of Art University, San Francisco, has come up with a new twist.

Pay your own way to Alaska and help me with my film, she told friends from San Francisco, and I'll get you room and board for 10 days.

"I've been so lucky and so blessed to work with so many talented people," she said of the students and teachers she's met in San Francisco.

Brennan, 25, graduates this spring with a bachelor of fine arts in cinematography. She's the director of photography — the woman behind the camera — of "What May Be True," a 7 to 10 minute short film about "how people cope with betrayal," Brennan said.

Born and raised in Homer, Brennan, 25, is the daughter of Patricia Brennan and the late Hugh Brennan. In December and January she has been visiting family and friends in Homer and scouting locations for "What May Be True," to be filmed this June. One scene will be shot at the Homer Harbor and another in a forest. She also needs an office or room that can pass as a therapist's office.

"What May Be True" has about five or six acting roles, including the main character, Gabriella, a girl about 16, and a woman therapist about 40 to 50. On her film's website, Brennan describes the project as "a powerful story about a woman who goes through emotional and physical trauma and the journey that she goes through to overcome the after effects."

*Photo by Michael
Armstrong*

*Homer News Katherine
Brennan,
cinematographer for
"What May Be True."*

A small-town woman starting a career in film is just part of a growing film industry in Alaska. Under the Alaska Film Production Incentive Program, Alaska offers generous tax credits to motion picture companies filming in the state. Last week, Sen. Johnny Ellis, D-Anchorage, and Representatives Bob Herron, D-Bethel, and Chris Tuck, D-Anchorage, prefiled legislation to extend those tax credits past its sunset date of 2013 (see Business, p. 6).

"The recent film industry boom in Alaska has benefited Alaskans and local businesses across the state, and it could grow much more," Ellis said. "Extending these incentives shows film producers Alaska is serious about building this industry for the long run."

Brennan wants Homer to be part of that boom, particularly for its scenic setting. For "What May Be True," she wants to use the landscape as a strong part of the film.

"I think Homer has a lot of potential and doesn't get the attention it deserves beyond 'Deadliest Catch' and 'Sarah Palin's Alaska,'" she said.

As a cinematographer, Brennan would like to see more Alaskans — and more women — behind the lens. Alaska only has about 25 professional camera operators that she knows of, Brennan said. It's also hard to rent professional quality cameras. Brennan plans to shoot her film using a Canon 5D high-definition, single-lens reflex video camera, one of the more common high-end cameras used in the industry. She's been lucky that the Academy of Arts has so many cameras for students to use, she said.

"I feel like a gear head nerd with cameras and not cars," Brennan said.

After graduation and making "What May Be True," Brennan said she plans to work for a while here to get ahead on bills. Eventually she'd like to get an entry-level job in the film industry — which could mean moving to Los Angeles. Although the Academy of the Arts is an art school, she said her education feels more like going to trade school. It's a lot of hands-on, learn-the-craft work.

"Every day I am doing something with film or video production," Brennan said about the school.

It's an art where the education continues.

"You're going to be learning, no matter what profession you're in," she said.

Brennan has a website set up through IndieGoGo, a web service that allows filmmakers, writers, musicians and other artists to make a pitch for support. Artists describe their projects, what they need in cash and other support, and how contributors will be acknowledged. While Brennan's new San Francisco friends will be helping her out, she's also looking for some hometown help. Anything locals can do in providing meals, lodging and other support would be appreciated.

She also has a site on vimeo.com showing some of the films she photographed or was involved in.

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