

Debbi Goedeke

BY BRIANNA SNYDER | PHOTO BY CINDY SCHULTZ

Debbi Goedeke has been the Albany film commissioner at Film Albany — a part of the Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau — for the last 11 years. Goedeke speaks with such enthusiasm and joy about Albany as a destination for movie studios that it kind of makes you want to personally call Steven Spielberg and tell him to get his butt to Albany. There's magic here. (Just take a look at our roundup of movies filmed in the Capital Region, pg. 28.)

So what exactly is your job?

My job is to pair up film projects and commercial projects that come into Albany with all of our local resources. For instance, I got a call from someone who wants to film at Albany Airport, so I put him in touch with the contact at Albany Airport. It's those same things when a film comes into Albany: I set them up with the permitting process, the Albany police department, and any other community partners. I always say I'm like the Albany Help button: I make it easy for people to come to Albany. I'm the operations gal.

To what extent do you market to studios that the Capital Region is a good place to film?

I have to be honest with you: We have a very small budget. So for me, here's what I find: If you take care of the clients while they're in town, they tell their friends about it. That's exactly what happened with "Salt." When "Salt" filmed here in Albany they told their friends and location managers. So word of mouth in this industry is absolute.

And how does it all work?

Many times what they'll do is they'll send me photographs of their scripts and they'll say, "We don't have to have this exactly, but this is what we're looking for." It helps me gauge what our resources here are.

I have a major TV series looking to film here in the spring.

What is it!

If I told you I'd have to kill you! But it's very well-known. And that happens a lot with this business, is it comes and goes but you never know what projects are going to stick. So you take care of everybody in the same exact manner and, again, they tell their friends about it.

The woman
who gets
movies made
in Albany

How do we benefit when movies are filmed here?

Well, the main thing is we're not burned out on having movies come here, like in NYC or L.A., where they're filling all the time. Our community loves it. They find it sexy; it's cool. You've got people tearing up State Street and Broadway and blowing up vans, and they find that very, very neat. But while those projects are in town, the economic impact is incredible, too. The crew all have to eat, they all have to stay someplace.

Was there ever a request you had to deny?

Yes, there was one. The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles were looking to film in Albany on 787 at exactly the same time that the construction was starting. We were very close to making it all happen but the timing didn't work. So they ended up going to our sister city, Buffalo.

Is there an actor or film project you hope will come here?

No, but I'll tell you a little story where I had an interaction with Robert Redford. It was a blast. It was the highlight of my Film Albany career. They were shooting a film called "The Company You Keep" that takes place in Albany but was filming in Vancouver. So they needed some Albany props that they could use in the studio to make it look like Albany. So I sent signs from Yono's and DP and some of the other restaurants downtown. They sent me a thank you and they couldn't have been nicer. The film people are just the best. Anyway, they contacted me afterwards and said, "Hey, listen, you were so nice in getting us that info. Is there something I can do for you?" I said, "I don't know if you can do this but I have always been a fan of Robert Redford and I would love it if I could get an autographed picture." I never gave it a second thought. About five weeks later I get a FedEx package from Vancouver and I'm like, "What the heck is this?" I opened it up. There is a beautiful box of Dutch chocolates and a picture of Robert Redford with a written note saying, "Thank you for all your help, Debbi. Robert Redford." I don't know if he signed it, I don't know if I care. It's on his picture with his signature. It's awesome. ■

