TV pilot crew gets cranking

BY CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE
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SENECA — "Elbow Grease" is not the only show in town.

Without much fanfare, the production crew of "Morningside" — a TV pilot series — is ready to film scenes at Lake Keowee's Lighthouse Restaurant.

A bar scene will be staged today with the Lake Keowee Wine Society in the backdrop.

Restaurant partner Richard Cottingham said the wine group meets every Thursday at the Lighthouse. He said the director decided to shoot the scene with members of the Wine Society sitting, talking and drinking.


Kelley

The pilot tells the story of wealth and power as seen through the eyes of two childhood friends who climbed the ladder of success, and now reunite with their families in their hometown — "Morningside"

On Tuesday, "Morningside" creator Debbie Kelley huddled with Cottingham and Lake Keowee Wine Society President Susan McElreath at the restaurant to go

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PILOT: Script submitted five times before being accepted

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over the game plan for today's shoot. Kelley is the co-writer, director and producer of "Morningside".

Brandon McAlister, the production's cinematographer, also attended Tuesday's meeting.

McAlister said his job is to hear Kelley's ideas and make it happen on camera.


McAlister

Kelley grew up in Easley and has many ties to Greenville, but she said much of the episode is being shot here at Lake Keowee.

"I was telling my assistant on the way here that we've ended up doing more with Lake Keowee with the pilot than we are in Greenville," Kelley said. "I had wanted a good balance, but based on the availability of the locations, and what people were willing to do, it's going to be more here."

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Debbie Kelley
Creator of Morningside

Cottingham is more than willing to accommodate the crew and their needs in exchange for the exposure it brings to the restaurant.

"They will be shooting Saturday, too, at the Cabana Bar," Cottingham said. "They call it Docks Bar in the script."

After discussions he's had with Kelley, Cottingham is confident some network will grab the pilot and run with it.

Kelley started out as a model appearing in TV commercials, but went on a different career path after she "went through a life change and I had two small children."

"I needed a job, 9 to 5," she said.

Over the next 13 years, Kelley mostly worked mostly with Lockheed Martin out of Greenville, doing production work of another kind.

"When you're a planner for aircraft, you're still planning and doing production type things, it's just for aircraft," she said.

During that stint, Kelley also worked on a NASA project. She was the only technical writer on the Stratospheric Observatory Infrared Astronomy project that studies the atmosphere.

While at Lockheed Martin, Kelley spent her free time working in community theater in Greenville and helping out with productions. She got an offer to start a business doing films and commercials. She got so busy, she ended up leaving Lockheed Martin.

"I've come full circle back to it," she said.

Kelley is now married to Hollywood movie maker Brian Q. Kelley. He has tons of credits to his name, including work on projects such as "Quantum Leap," "X-Files," "Star Wars," "Star Trek" and "Iron Man." He also is helping out with "Morningside".

Debbie Kelley said Danielle Leslie submitted the manuscript to "Morningside" five times before she embraced it.

"We started collaborating together to get it ready for television," she said. "We started putting more depth and complexity into the storyline and into the characters."

Debbie Kelley said two networks, which she declined to identify, are interested in the pilot.

Cottingham is banking on the pilot being a winner.

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