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# Filming for 'On Fire' Begins on Campus

by Joe Barker

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**Members of the Saint Louis University community got an up-close look at the making of a movie both in front of and behind the camera.**

Production crews were on SLU's campus for two days filming for the upcoming movie, "On Fire." The film tells the story of SLU alum John O'Leary (CSB '99).

A group of students got a chance to be part of the film on camera as background extras. Other students were given the opportunity to learn just how a movie works by shadowing the film's crew.

The commencement scene of "On Fire," a movie based on alum John O'Leary's life, in filmed outside of the Center for Global Citizenship on Thursday, Nov. 10. *Photo by Sarah Conroy.*

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On Friday, Nov. 10, the production was outside filming scenes around SLU's landmark Lipic Clock Tower plaza. Prior to filming, the production company put out a call for extras — background performers who aren't in the main cast.

For the scenes shot at SLU, the production needed extras to take on the role of SLU students. It is a role Bryce Beck has been preparing to play.

"I'm not an actor at all," he said. "I thought this would be a good opportunity. My whole life, I've been method acting for this role because I'm actually a SLU student."

Beck, a Chaifetz School of Business student, said he thought the process would be a cool, unique experience. He found out about the film through his girlfriend, Trinity Thomas.

Thomas, a School of Social Work student, said her father, Travis, is friends with O'Leary. O'Leary shared the call for extras with the Thomas family, and Trinity jumped at the chance.

"I thought it would be fun," Thomas said. "I'm not interested in being an actress or anything, but I think it's really fun. It's so interesting to be here as cast when we're normally here as students."

Part of the allure for Thomas and Beck was not having to go too far. Thomas said she went to bed Thursday night in her dorm room and then, Friday morning, had a short commute to the Center for Global Citizenship for filming.

Thomas said her friends and family think her role as an extra is cool, even if they don't know the full story. She said she was limited on what she could tell people before the movie's release.

"We're not allowed to give a lot of detail, so it's been really hush-hush," Thomas said.

Students pass behind cameras during filming of the commencement scene of "On Fire," a movie based on alum John O'Leary's life, on Thursday, Nov. 10. *Photo by Sarah Conroy.*

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Unlike Beck and Thomas, London Kimble, an Arts and Sciences student majoring in theater and communication, has worked on productions before. She said found out about the need for extras through her connections in the industry. She also said SLU's Visual and Performing Arts students were alerted to the casting call.

"This is not my first film. The first one I was in was in the fourth grade," she said. "I've been auditioning and doing film and theatre since then."

Kimble said getting her degree is important to her, so that has limited her chances to do film work while being a student. Having a movie on her campus was a nice surprise, she said.

"It's very convenient," she said.

Kimble said she is looking forward to watching the finished film, even if she doesn't make the final cut.

"I've followed John O'Leary's story for a little bit. About 10 years ago, he gave a speech at my school," she said. "Finding out that he was a SLU alum and part of the movie would be filmed here, connecting all of those dots, it was pretty extraordinary."

The SLU extras weren't the only members of the SLU community on set. Visual and Performing Arts Coordinator Sara Rae Womack brought along three students for a unique behind-the-scenes look at film production.

Visual and Performing Arts Coordinator Sara Rae Womack, back right, and student Lauren Tubbe, watch director Sean McNamara, front left, during filming of "On Fire," a movie based on alum John O'Leary's life, on Thursday, Nov. 10. *Photo by Sarah Conroy.*

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Tony Chaboude, Madeline Chatham and Lauren Tubbe got to hang out just out of the camera's frame. The trio were positioned near the film's director and got to listen and learn about how a film is made.

"All of this is just really cool to me because this is what I want to do in the future," Tubbe said. "It's really neat to be on a real movie set. I'm really excited to learn how sets run and all of the moving parts."

Chaboude said he was thrilled to have a movie shooting not just at SLU but in St. Louis.

"This is a great moment for St. Louis and film in general," Chaboude said. "I'm very excited to see it on our campus, and I'm excited to get a chance to observe this great process of filmmaking. ... It's so cool to see a set in St. Louis. It's either set in LA or New York City, so to see something in the direct center of my college it's very awesome. "

Chatham was excited to get a chance to explore a potential career path.

"One of the things I'm really passionate about is performing, and I've never gotten a chance to experience anything like this," she said. "It's cool to see this and experience it and find out if this is a career path I want to take. I'm very excited to be behind the scenes."

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