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St. Louis native's story to hit big screen, local filming continues

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ST. LOUIS COUNTY, Mo. – A film centered around resilience, human potential, and hope is being filmed right now in St. Louis, and Tuesday was the biggest day of filming yet. FOX 2 had the chance to speak one-on-one with the St. Louis native who inspired the upcoming movie about his life, ‘On Fire.’

More than 100 people swarmed a Town and Country front yard Tuesday for the big shoot. It was a Hollywood scene right in the heart of St. Louis County. Everyone was there to tell the story that ignited John O’Leary’s remarkable journey. However, O’Leary said his story should serve as a reminder that we have the power to write our own narratives.

“This movie reminds us that the heartbreak doesn’t have to define us,” O’Leary explained.

O’Leary invited us out to the set Tuesday at his childhood home in Town and Country, where he was badly burned and nearly lost his life at 9 years of age. He still lives with the scars from that fire to this day.

Tuesday’s filming focused on a reenactment of the fire itself and of

his triumphant homecoming from the hospital those years ago – the start of the main character's comeback story.

"This is the house I grew up in," O'Leary said. "It's the house I was raised in, the house I was burned in, the house where my parents still live."

O'Leary said this particular day of filming had a profound impact on him and his family.

"I've been crying about half the day," he added.

The movie shoot has brought in actors, film crew members, and equipment from across the country. O'Leary has become an inspiration for thousands of people. He has given motivational speeches, written books, and offered advice for people facing adversity. But he said his success never would have been possible without the help of his close friends and family.

"Your life can be used for good. And it takes John O'Leary the vast majority of the movie to figure that out. And the only reason he ever does is because people keep showing up for him," O'Leary said.

The story straight out of a St. Louis front yard is headed to the big screens. It could serve as a reminder of the untapped potential we all have and how much we can overcome together.

Filming for 'On Fire' will continue for another month. The crew is set to film still at Busch Stadium, the Gateway Arch, and Union Station, among other sites. O'Leary said the film will hit the big screens around Thanksgiving 2024.