

# Hollywood comes to Midland

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The lights and cameras of Hollywood lured Jennifer Schaefer from her hometown of Midland in 1997. She found success in Hollywood, producing award-winning films and starting her own company, PowerGirl Pictures.

Now she's brought Hollywood home.

Schaefer is the director of the Education and Training Connection's Filmmaking Industry Training Program. She also will teach the first class, a two-week, 60-hour course about filmmaking fundamentals, including set etiquette, language and the basics of being a production assistant, and how to create a résumé and find a job. The ETC program also will work with its students to help them find filmmaking jobs.

The class cost is \$2,500 and will start in mid-August. Pell grants can be used for the class, and Michigan Works also has money available for training. ETC also has payment plans if needed.

ETC director Lyn Knapp said the first class will give its students the tools to walk onto a film set and be a production assistant. A production assistant does just about everything from fetching coffee to helping the producer. Many PAs move into other film careers such as camera assistant.

The program will expand to specialized classes that will teach other aspects of filmmaking, including wardrobe, production designer, and hair and makeup.

Schaefer said several filmmaking careers — carpenters, electricians and lighting technicians — could be ideal for displaced workers.

"Just look at all the potential for jobs," Knapp said.

Schaefer has lined up some Hollywood colleagues to teach the specialized courses: C. Jay Cox, writer/director of "Latter Days" and writer of "Chilled in Miami" and "Sweet Home Alabama;" Laura Brody, costume designer on such films as "Kiss the Bride" and "Richard the III;" and Jeanne Van Phue, makeup artist for "Twilight," "Lords of Dogtown," "Sideways" and other films, are just some of the talents she has lined up coming to ETC.

But teaching is just one aspect of the program. Bringing filmmaking to Michigan, and especially to the Tri-Cities, is another.

"Most of the films coming to Michigan are being filmed in Detroit," Schaefer said. "We want to show (producers) there is a northern part — the Tri-Cities.

"I'd like to say just give this a chance," she continued. "I just know as a filmmaker and knowing this business, it will bring jobs. And it has a lot of potential to bring more money than the auto industry."

Dawn Cline, ETC director of marketing and training, said the program will work with business owners on their rights and responsibilities when a film is being produced on their property.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm recently signed bipartisan legislation that could make Michigan attractive to filmmakers. The package gives film studios a refundable credit of up to 42 percent on production expenses in the state. For example, if an out-of-state studio has no Michigan Business Tax liability and spends \$10 million on production in the state, the state will cut it a check for up to \$4.2 million. The credit otherwise can be used by in-state and out-of-state studios to reduce their state taxes.

"The intention of the Michigan government is to bring jobs to Michigan," Knapp said. "When someone brings a big-budget film to your town, the potential (earnings) is \$20 million to \$30 million for the community."

Schaefer feels Midland and the surrounding areas are just perfect for filmmaking.

"The locations, especially in the summertime — it's gorgeous," she said. "Every time I walk around downtown Midland, I feel like I'm on the backlot of a Warner Brothers movie."

For more information, go to [www.etc-1.com/](http://www.etc-1.com/) or call 1-888-3U-LEARN.

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