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Film commissioner status enhances HVAB's industry focus

Happy Valley holds promise as a destination for film and filmmakers

STATE COLLEGE, PA, Sept. 16, 2024 – The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB) today announced an important step in its desire to engage at a greater level with and evolve the local film community.

HVAB Film Production Manager Pablo Lopez recently completed all the coursework, requirements, and professional development to obtain recognition as an Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI) Certified Film Commissioner. The HVAB recently joined AFCI to broaden relationships within the film industry.

“We realized that there is untapped potential in Happy Valley with regard to film and television production,” said HVAB President and CEO Fritz Smith.

Smith pointed to the area's beautiful outdoor scenery, historic and unique architecture, and the presence of one of the premier film programs in the country at Penn State University as rationale for starting a film attraction effort. Adding to that appeal is the growing list of individuals with significant industry experience who have moved to Happy Valley, PA.

“We saw an opportunity to capitalize on Pablo's expertise and his desire to help grow Happy Valley's potential in this arena by investing in him through the AFCI certification process,” Smith said.

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Lopez, who has been with the HVAB since 2019, is a 2016 Communication in Film and Video graduate of Penn State's Film Production and Media studies program within the Bellisario College of Communications.

He is also active in the independent film community as Founder and Creative Director of Dark Mind Productions.

"I'm incredibly excited to be certified through the Association of Film Commissioners International, leading the effort to highlight our beautiful region as a premier location for film production," Lopez said. "I also look forward to fostering relationships with my film commissioner counterparts and the Pennsylvania Film Commission to help the HVAB champion even more creative opportunities and economic growth for film in the area."

Lopez recently attended the 2024 AFCI Week in Los Angeles, CA, where he officially received his film commissioner certification. He is currently assisting several proof-of-concept films and shorts being filmed in Happy Valley.

Eric Engelbarts, Executive Director of the Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance, said Lopez's certification positions Happy Valley as a key player in the Pennsylvania film industry, attracting new opportunities and bringing fresh economic growth to the community.

"We are excited to see how this will boost the region's profile as a sought-after destination for filmmakers," he said.

Smith said Happy Valley's built-in talent pipeline and burgeoning film ecosystem provide a solid foundation from which to stimulate, encourage and incentivize film, television and other video production in the county, creating jobs and boosting local businesses.

"Rather than look back and say, 'we should have done something,' likeminded stakeholders are having serious conversations about the next steps in growing the film industry here, giving talent a reason to stay to develop their craft," he said. "Having a certified film commissioner for the county is a meaningful step to make it happen."

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