

Special Screening of "A Place to Grow"

Berrien Springs documentary to show again in June

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By: Becky St. Clair

The Berrien Film Project invites the public to attend a special screening of its film, “A Place to Grow,” a documentary about the community of Berrien Springs-Oronoko Township. The event will take place on Sunday, June 12, at 6 p.m. in the Howard Performing Arts Center on the campus of Andrews University. Admission is free; no tickets required. The documentary debuted at two special screening events in April.

“Several years ago we did something similar to this using a slideshow, and it was a huge hit,” says project committee chair Dave Faehner. “We filled the Berrien Springs High School gymnasium and the whole community came out for the event. It was fantastic. We want to recreate that sense of pride in our community—we’re just using a slightly different medium this time.”

The film’s producer is Pieter Damsteegt, long-time resident of Oronoko Township and a 2013 graduate of the documentary film program at Andrews University. He spent hundreds of hours capturing iconic, everyday images from around the area over the course of all four seasons.

Milt Richter, village president, has lived in Berrien Springs for over 50 years. He raised his daughters here and proudly welcomes his six grandchildren to his hometown when they visit.

“My favorite thing about Berrien Springs is the friendly people,” says Richter. “I walk around town and people always say hi and ask how I’m doing. We’re a close-knit community, but we’re also friendly and open to everyone. We want to help people and share our community with them.”

Mike Hildebrand, supervisor at Oronoko Charter Township, feels similarly. He feels this film has rekindled the community pride many experience on a regular basis, giving residents the opportunity to enjoy that pride together.

“When people are proud of the place they call home, they feel better, they look for ways to contribute to their community, and their attitude is contagious,” he says. “The Berrien Film Project showcases various segments of the community that may not be stitched together by anything other than the community itself. That brings an unrivaled sense of togetherness.”

“I have a great sense of pride living here and owning a family farm in the Berrien Springs community,” says Bryan Bixby, supervisor at Berrien Township. “This is a special place to live and work; sense of family, community and pride runs deep in Berrien Springs.”

Richter shares that in his experience, long-time residents as well as newcomers agree that Berrien Springs has a lot to offer, from quality parks to top-notch schools to beautiful tree-lined streets to the international aspect brought by Andrews University and everything in-between.

“There’s a lot about Berrien Springs to capture, and I think Pieter has done an excellent job,” he says. “I’m looking forward to another chance to reconnect with my fellow villagers and acknowledge that community pride together again.”

“I love our community and how unique it is,” says Hildebrand. “Diversity works here—from the international and educational aspects of the University, to the wineries, breweries and fruit farms, to the world-class fishing on the river, to the focus on youth at the County Fair, to the award-winning schools. Berrien Springs truly is a place to grow.”

Sponsors of the film-screening event include:

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