HOLLYWOOD COMES TO CAMPUS

THE LIGHTS. THE CAMERAS. THE ACTION. IT’S HARD NOT
to get caught up in all the glitz and glitter and dreams-come-true of
Hollywood. Especially when it’s all right outside your office door.

As more and more films and television shows take advantage of
the College’s unparalleled beauty and its neoclassical 18th- and 19th-
century architecture, Hollywood’s visits are becoming familiar. The
camera and sound crews, the hair and makeup teams, the directors
and production designers and, of course, the actors: When Hollywood
comes to campus, it makes quite a scene.

“It’s like bringing a three-ring circus to campus,” says Stan Gray,
director of event marketing. “But when it’s over, a part of the College
goes back on tour with the rest of the performers. Its beauty
will live on in those cinematic moments that potentially millions of
people will see. The residual benefits of that kind of exposure are hard
to quantify.”

The College’s beauty lives on, for example, in Cold Mountain, The
Patriot, White Squall, The Notebook, North and South and O – not to
mention in episodes of Crossfire, Wife Swap, General Hospital and
The View. And, with two feature films – The New Daughter and Dear
John – and an episode of the Lifetime series Army Wives added to its
filmography in 2008 alone, the College is quite the rising star.

And it’s bringing students, staff and faculty up with it – mainly as
extras in the films.

“I was an extra in a few scenes – I played a professor,” says real-life
English Professor Bret Lott, adding that there were some 60 student
eextras on the Dear John set with him last October. “I changed into
three different outfits, enjoyed a cigar while watching them film a
scene I wasn’t in and got a terrific lunch out of the deal. It was fun,
weird and very, very, very interesting all at the same time.”

For Teresa Smith, who plays a nurse in the film, the part was a long
time coming.

“I’ve auditioned for five or six films, and I’ve gotten several
callbacks, but this is the first time I got the part,” says the director
of multicultural student programs and services. “You can’t imagine
how excited I was when my agent at Coastal Talent called to say I

got the part.”

Smith, pictured above, is active in community theater and has been
in local and regional commercials, print ads, instructional videos and
even an episode of One Tree Hill.

Still, she had no idea what to expect when she arrived on the set of
Dear John.

“I certainly wasn’t expecting the star treatment,” she says. “But
when I got there, they led me to my very own trailer with my own
dressing table and TV and VCR. They made me feel so special. Little
ole me!”

It wasn’t long before “little ole” Smith, whose role in the film
involves handing Henry Thomas (think Elliott in E.T.) his pills and
a cup of water (a task that was shot from every angle over and over
again), was swept up in the experience of it all.

“It felt kind of surreal. There’s always someone there to lead you,
to take you from the wardrobe tent to the makeup tent, to tell you
where to be and what to do. People were there to make it all happen,”
says Smith. “There were probably 70 or 80 people there. You’d think
it’d be complete chaos, but people all had their various roles, and it
worked without a hitch.”

It was a big production and a long day (12 hours) for a small role in
a short scene, but for Smith, it was a dream come true.

“It was a great experience. Now it’s like, I want more, more, more,”
she says. “I’m not moving to Hollywood or anything, but I’ve
definitely caught the bug.”

Besides, who needs to go to Hollywood, when Hollywood will come
to you!
MAKING MELODY: Debby Jeter and Leslie Sautter Find Perfect Harmony

DEBBY JETER’S KNEES PUMP UP
and down slightly as she plucks at her
mandolin, its bright notes dancing around
the compelling melody of Leslie Sautter’s
fiddle. Sautter sits next to her, tapping
the fourth grade. “And what I play now isn’t
the spotlight.

Of course, it’s not just about being in
the spotlight.

“We love harmonizing together,” says
Sautter (pictured on right), associate
professor of geology and environmental
geosciences. “It’s interesting to hear the
vocal parts play off of each other. That’s
our favorite thing to do, and our biggest
strength: vocal harmonizing.”

The harmony between Sautter and Jeter
began about 10 years ago at, of all places,
a convention for college faculty that they
attended in Oregon.

“It just came out in conversation that we
both played guitar and liked to sing,” says
Jeter, senior instructor of mathematics. “So
we started playing together – singing and
picking – basically whenever we had some
time. It was very informal.”

Both faculty members had played guitar
when they were young, and – since both
had gotten a little rusty over the years –
this seemed like a great way to brush up
their skills and have a little fun. And they
were right.

“Not having played music in so long, it
was just like I was missing something,” says
Jeter. “And then picking this up with Leslie
was like starting out on a new journey. It’s
been a blast, and it’s so fulfilling. I’ve got so
much passion for it.”

Jeter and Sautter had so much passion
for music, in fact, that they didn’t stop with
guitar and voice. Jeter took up the mandolin
and Sautter broke out her old violin.

“I didn’t really start the fiddle style of
violin until we started playing together,” says
Sautter, who began playing classical violin in
the fourth grade. “And what I play now isn’t
the traditional fiddle. It’s more harmonizing
and bringing things together.”

And, it turns out the harmonizing is
bringing more than just Sautter and Jeter
together. About four years ago, they hooked
up with another guitarist and a bass player
to form a folk band called Sweetgrass.

Touted as “Sweeter than Blue,” the band
has eight original songs under its belt and is
planning to record some tracks in the near
future. Until then, however, the group is
content playing together and performing
at private parties, festivals and, most
regularly, the Morgan Creek Grill at the
Isle of Palms Marina.

“I love performing,” says Sautter. “We
wouldn’t do this if we didn’t get to perform.
We’re very comfortable in front of people.
After all, we are professors!”

Of course, it’s not just about being in
the spotlight.

“We love performing because it gives
us something to work toward,” says Jeter,
explaining that the band practices together
twice a week. “It’s the payoff for all that
practice, all that fine-tuning.”

Although, truth be told, practicing isn’t
all that bad itself.

“You can go to practice and, if you’ve had
a bad day, as soon as the first note is played
or when you first start singing, all the stress
goes away,” says Sautter. “You’re caught up
in it and you’re having a great time.”

Or, as Jeter puts it: “It just feels good.”

GARDEN'S PICK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Tip:

The Red-Tailed hawk is weak, it's
typical to take several hours of
energy to get it moving.

If you're not sure, check
with your local veterinarian
or wildlife rehabilitator.
STARGAZING
Chris True Takes a Closer Look

THE BIG DIPPER, THE MILKY WAY, MAYBE even a meteor shower or a total lunar eclipse: No matter what spectacle you saw the last time you gazed up at the night sky, it probably doesn’t compare to what Chris True has seen.

That’s because, as the College’s astronomy lab manager, True not only has the occasion to observe his celestial surroundings a little more often than the rest of us, but also has access to some pretty serious magnification.

“You can see light years away with these,” says True, nodding toward one of the 8-inch telescopes used in his lab. “And, with the big 16-inch telescope under the dome, you can see distant galaxies.”

But, of course, True doesn’t just spend his time exploring distant galaxies. There’s too much to be done right here at home.

In addition to teaching astronomy labs from 7 to 10 at night, he also teaches Astronomy II and maintains the observatory dome and the two observing decks on the roof of the Rita Liddy Hollings Science Center – not to mention all the related equipment.

“There’s a lot of equipment, a lot of computers, which means a lot can go wrong. I just try to keep it up and running,” says True, whose background is in optical engineering. “I have to keep on top of everything. It’s not just the technical stuff. You have to know how to do everyday maintenance. You have to be able to pound a nail.”

Still, even the most skilled maintenance worker or mechanical engineer won’t make it in this position without some good old-fashioned people skills.

“You have to be open and available, and you have to have communication skills, since you’re always talking with students,” True says, adding that working with the students is one of the highlights of his job. “Seeing them catch on to the subject when they get out on the roof, and hearing them ooh and ahh about the things they see – it’s really rewarding.”

Also rewarding is working with the public. On the first Friday of every month of the academic year, the Department of Physics and Astronomy holds an open house in the observatory, welcoming questions and curiosity about the equipment, the sky and even the universe.

“We’ve had an entire Boy Scout troop up here,” says True as he climbs the circular staircase leading from the “warm room” (where the computers that control the telescope are housed) to the observatory dome. He presses a button and one of the dome’s aluminum panels slides back to expose a strip of sky; he flips a switch and the dome rotates. “The kids always get excited when we spin the dome. They think all of this is really great.”

And, clearly, he can relate. Whether he’s witnessing the development of a faraway starburst galaxy or watching a shuttle leave the International Space Station, True never tires of peering through the telescope.

“The universe is always in a state of change. There’s always something else to see, some other event, something else to learn,” he says. “At the same time, you don’t have to study astronomy to appreciate the sky – it offers something for everyone.”

So, go ahead, grab a telescope and shoot for the stars. You never know what you’ll find. ☉

Visit the observatory and observing deck at the Science Center for the next open house on Friday, February 6, 6:30–8 p.m. For more information, contact Chris True at 3.2031 or truc@cofc.edu.

GARDENER’S PICK

Resurrection Fern

AKA: Polypodium polydoides.
ON CAMPUS: Found in the branches of the live oaks in the Cistern Yard and on the wall in front of 24 Bull Street.
DESCRIPTION: This creeping air plant has a thin stem and deeply cut, leathery fronds. Often found in the company of Spanish moss, this fern lives on air and the nutrients and water that collect on its host, and it is a good indicator of air quality as it doesn’t tolerate polluted air. It survives extensive dry periods (up to 100 years!) by curling and rolling inward to protect itself from water loss. This little evergreen may appear dead, but will revive as soon as it rains or the humidity rises.

TIPS: To propagate, take several inches of rhizome from a starter plant (e.g., from a fallen branch) and squeeze it into the grooves of the new host’s bark. Plant in living trees providing open air and partial shade.
FOR THE BIRDS: Isaac Green’s Passion and Altruism Take Flight

THE RED-TAILED HAWK IS WEAK, ITS underside matted with blood. Isaac Green holds the raptor gingerly between gloved hands, allowing another volunteer to clip its feathers and look for wounds. Green captured the injured hawk on Folly Beach after receiving a tip from a resident. Now the hawk rests on its back on an examination table at the Center for Birds of Prey in Awendaw, its eyes covered with a cloth and its large talons pointing skyward.

“Covering the head is a great trick for keeping them calm,” says Green, who has volunteered at the center for more than two years, nursing injured hawks, eagles, owls, vultures, falcons and pelicans back to health.

“It’s a get-out-from-behind-the-computer sort of thing,” says the assistant professor of computer science. Fearful that the clinic might be too emotional, he originally donated his time to the educational mission of the center, which – in addition to providing medical care and onsite and outreach educational programs – conducts field and laboratory research studies and participates in international conservation issues. After a few months, however, he changed his mind, wanting instead to “get up close and personal with the birds.”

That he does each Sunday, wrapping birds in fabric and taking their weight, helping them take shots and fitting feeding tubes down their throats. With the tubes in place, he can give emaciated birds easily digestible doses of baby food or “osprey juice,” which he describes as “Gatorade or Pedialyte for birds.”

Green also skins rats and de-feathers baby chicks for undernourished raptors, removing any indigestible body parts.

“It’s just something you have to do,” he says. “You get used to it. You really do.”

One thing you never get used to, however, is when the birds don’t make it.

“Sometimes you get attached to the birds and you have to put them down,” Green says. “Ones you think were going to live, die.”

But there’s just as much inspiration from the animals as there is heartbeat. Since 1991, 4,476 birds have been treated at the center, and approximately half have been released back into the wild.

“I’m always amazed at how resilient the birds actually are,” Green says. “We do the best we can, and a lot of them do make a full recovery.”

And that’s one of the reasons that Green keeps making the trek all the way to Awendaw every week.

“I really like interacting with them and helping them recover,” he says. “And it’s definitely fun to release them, especially when it’s a bird that you’ve known for a while.”

The birds typically recover about six to eight weeks after they arrive at the clinic, and they’re usually released in a bird-friendly habitat shortly thereafter.

And, while it is sad to say goodbye, Green is always glad to see them go.

“It’s fun to see them fly away on their own,” he says. “It’s just nice to know you’ve helped.”

After all, a helping hand is hardly for the birds.
It was the luck of the draw, and Crystal Owens hit the jackpot. Hardly the gambling type, Owens didn’t put a whole lot of thought into TriCounty Link’s sweepstake for a trip to Vegas and a year of free bus rides. Even though the bus line’s patrons could enter a ticket into the pot every time they used the service between September and December – and even though Owens rides this line every day on her commute to and from work – she only entered the drawing twice.

“The driver would always hand me a ticket, but usually I just threw it away because I never win anything,” says the administrative support coordinator in the Office of Admissions and Adult Student Services.

Which explains why she was so skeptical when she heard she’d won. “They called the office and said ‘Congratulations! You’re going to Vegas!’ and I thought it was a prank call,” Owens recalls. “Even when we went to the bus stop and they had a banner and flowers and everything, I still thought it was some practical joke my brother was playing on me.”

But it was no joke, and Owens is now saving the money ($4.50 a day, roughly $1,000 a year) she’d otherwise be spending on the TriCounty Link bus from Summerville to the CARTA Express Park and Ride stop in North Charleston.

And that trip to Vegas? A wildcard.

“I read over the package, and they gave us a few options, so we’re going to Disneyland instead of Las Vegas,” says Owens. “My kids really wanted to go, and I’ve never been so, we’re going this summer.”

It looks like Owens has played her cards right.
Thanks to everyone who participated in the last photo quiz, and congratulations to Garrett Milliken, associate professor of psychology, who was the first to guess that the object in question was the “little wheel” in the pecan tree behind 65 Coming Street. The fixture is most likely a clothesline wheel that looped a line between the tree and a matching pulley that was probably affixed to a nearby window or porch, perhaps at 6 Bull Street. It was probably installed in the mid-20th-century.

Take a look at the picture above. The object can be found on campus. Do you know what it is? The first person to submit the correct answer will win a tasty lunch for two at Liberty Street Fresh Food Company, compliments of ARAMARK. Good luck!

Send your submission to lutza@cofc.edu by Monday, February 16, 2009. The contest is open to all College faculty and staff. One submission per person, please.

If you had to choose another career, what would it be and why?

Charlie Short
Procurement Officer

“If I had to choose another career, it would have been in the IT field, as I enjoy working with computers and software. Solving problems is very rewarding.”

Cathy Evans
Media Specialist at the Addlestone Library

“Dream educator’ would be one of my top choices. It’s a good way to encourage people to live from their depths. Familiarity with dreams and metaphorical language helps people to develop a clear understanding of underlying patterns, thereby enhancing their ability to become flexible and creative agents of personal and social transformation.”

John Newell
Dean of the Honors College

“That is hard to answer because I have so enjoyed what I have done at the College. But if I had to choose another career, it would be an international tour guide. That would allow me to travel extensively worldwide, something that I have not had the chance to do as much as I would like. At the same time, it would allow me to continue to do some of the things I have enjoyed most about my work in teaching and with the Honors College: conducting research, teaching about things that interest me and working with students.”