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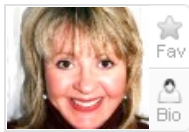
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Michigan-made Annabelle & Bear film delivers a timeless message (Part 2 of 2 and sixth in a series)

February 27, 1:28 AM • Detroit City Buzz Examiner • Wendy Clem

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Olivia Walby, 3, child star of "Annabelle & Bear," and the film's writer and director, Amy Weber.
Wendy Clem

Amy Weber, a 41-year-old Birmingham resident and two-time Emmy winner, is now hoping for film distribution for "[Annabelle & Bear](#)," whose timeless message includes one of real-life industrious Michigan workers as well as a touching fictitious father and daughter story.

The lifetime Michigan native established her production company, Radish Creative Group, in 1997 while jointly finishing her master's degree in communications arts at Eastern Michigan University, and teaching at EMU and Specs Howard.

She credits [burgeoning statewide moviemaking](#) with Michigan's foresight for establishing a better entrepreneurial climate and carving out a new economic niche.

"[Annabelle & Bear](#)' couldn't have been made without the state's film incentive - that has done everything to encourage projects and caused artistic possibilities to bloom," Weber said. "Now those who are taking part in projects, even the nonpaying ones like 'Annabelle & Bear,' have a solid film credit

and were part of a special project."

Weber says that the production, for which all who took part received no remuneration, was never a matter of money. Utilizing a mix of some film veterans and brand-new faces, she tapped a talented volunteer pool for her project.

"It was about sharing a beautiful story, about healing and about hopefully - when there are cases like this in real life - people will remember 'Annabelle' and get involved to help," she said.

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It was that mindset that urged Weber to include Starfish Family Services, based in Inkster, in benefiting from the movie's premiere. The 45-year-old nonprofit organization has helped children and families in the metro-Detroit area in similar predicaments to Bear's.

Weber says that profits raised at the premiere will help Starfish continue its work. The agency's CEO, Ann Kalass, was on hand to mingle and discuss the work her group does daily.

[Music received a shot in the arm](#) with 'Annabelle's' release, too. The 16-song soundtrack was created entirely by Michigan musicians, two of whom also snagged film cameos. Following a contest that narrowed the musicians' field from 500 applicants to 10, two - Nervous but Excited and Vigilante Sidekicks - were featured in scenes.

Guitarist Todd Clem, 24, of Vigilante Sidekicks, was impressed by the film's debut and the quality of the trailer, which plays on the website.

"It's generated people's interest," Clem, a Southfield resident, said, "and it is very well put-together. I think this evening's tickets being sold out reflects how well received it has been."

April Anselmo, of Madison Heights, was working in the film's craft services when Weber recruited her for a walk-on part in a diner. The 60-year-old laid-off librarian had enrolled in acting classes under the [No Worker Left Behind program](#), and may have found a new calling, she says.

"I'm so excited by this new energy in Michigan, but I have never referred to it as Hollywood coming here," she said. "I only refer to it as [Michigan beginning its own movie industry](#) and establishing itself as a leader in that business."

Weber modestly declines the suggestion of a local television reporter that she prepare for receipt of an Oscar once the film is distributed and wins further audience embrace.

"What is better than an Oscar for me will be to hear people's feedback after viewing the movie," she said. "I hope to hear they are pleasantly surprised that 'Annabelle & Bear' is a local production because it's done that well. And, I really hope this strikes a blow for independent film everywhere."

Don't miss Part 1 of this article, as well as the Detroit City Buzz movie series articles!

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