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Christmas movie filming in Dahlonega this week

Production company creating Iowa Christmas in Georgia town

By **Ron Bridgeman**

rbridgeman@gainesvilletimes.com

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RACHEL BUREL/The Times

Christmas decorations are up two months early in Dahlonega as part of filming for the Hallmark movie "Shooting Christmas."

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Downtown Dahlonega will be a movie set this week — for the third time in a year.

A Hallmark movie, "Shooting Christmas," will be filming in the historic town square today through Thursday.

The movie crew started filming the last week of September. The crew expects to be in downtown Oct. 12-13 also.

The movie is expected to be broadcast Nov. 22, said Director of Tourism David Zunker.

Zunker said Curmudgeon Production Co. is making the movie. It is based in both Los Angeles and Louisiana, he said.

The other two filmings were "Christmas in the Smokies" by INSP and a TV pilot, "Hail Mary." Zunker said the decision on the pilot has not been made yet.

"Shooting Christmas" is about a small town in Iowa, Zunker said. He noted "the magic of television" might flatten hills of North Georgia. The story is about a "movie within a movie," Zunker said.

It is being produced at a rapid pace.

The production company came to Dahlonega about three weeks ago, he said, intending to look

at seven Georgia communities.

"They never left," Zunker said. "They said, 'We found exactly what we're looking for.'"

The town and Lumpkin County "is very happy to have them," Zunker said.

About 20 to 25 people are in town for the company, he said. The company has opened a costume and props shop.

The company — with help from the town — is decorating the square for Christmas. He said the town's Christmas lights have been re-strung and put up — nearly two months early.

"They were lit up Monday this week," he said.

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He said the production also plans to create a skating rink and will make snow. It also uses blankets of snow to help decorate. The company uses SnoWonder, a polymer that imitates the properties of snow.

He said the company also has hired about 10 people for administrative work and expects to have about 250 extras.

"Everybody's looking for their 15 minutes of fame," Zunker said, "or their 15 seconds of fame."

Zunker said the primary concerns are parking and traffic flow. Traffic has not had to shut down, but he said it will be interrupted this week.

The company uses "intermittent traffic control," he said, to minimize problems. The company also films late at night.

"It hasn't been much of an inconvenience," Zunker said. "They're very good at planning."

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