

L.A. Filming Benefits Homeless and Needy Families

Published on Thursday, 17 January 2013 00:25 |  |  | Hits: 37



The Union Rescue Mission (URM,) a non-profit organization that helps provide housing for up to 800 people a night experiencing homelessness, has just teamed up with Hollywood's premier location agency, Real to Reel Locations. Working in tandem, URM and Real to Reel will reach out to film and television productions to regularly film at URM's two properties—the downtown L.A. facility and its Hope Gardens Family Center located in the Northeast San Fernando Valley.

One hundred per cent of URM's revenues generated from filming at these two URM locations will go directly back into the programs designed to help less fortunate individuals and families living across Los Angeles. These programs include providing transitional housing for women and children suffering from domestic violence and other causes of family homelessness.



Over the last 10 years, only a handful of film or television productions have filmed at the relatively unknown Hope Gardens Family Center location. Since Real to Reel Locations has begun representing the Hope Gardens site, a number of TV and film projects have filmed there. These include: Comedy Central's "Workaholics" and "Review with Forrest McNeil," CBS TV's "Criminal Minds," and a new feature film, "Max Rose," starring Jerry Lewis.

Jeffrey Spellman, location manager for *Criminal Minds*, was always curious about the Hope Gardens location. "We've driven past the Hope Gardens site a few times in the past, but it didn't occur to us to shoot there. Then a script came up, we called Real to Reel, and we were told that it was now available for filming. We checked it out and fell in love with the place immediately. It's secluded and extremely versatile—it can replicate Oregon or Virginia or Texas. The place is a real gem."

Real to Reel also has high hopes for the Downtown Union Rescue Mission building. Located in the heart of Skid Row, the Union Rescue Mission stands at five stories tall and offers over 225,000 square feet of space. The building has a variety of attractive looks for filming which include cafeterias, locker rooms, showers, a library, rec rooms, dentist offices, a rooftop playground, a chapel, and a gymnasium, etc. Despite the building's amazing versatility as a film

location, no production has ever filmed there. After representing the Union Rescue Mission for less than a month, RTR has already showed the building to multiple productions for possible film shoots including location managers with NBC's hit TV drama, *Body of Proof*.

Scott Johnson, vice president of operations, for URM said, "With the downturn in the economy, donations to our organization have been more challenging and we have had to work harder and be more creative at developing funding streams. Just recently, and on a whim, I realized that offering our two sites for film and TV productions would be a great way to generate new revenues while incurring very little overhead." He adds, "After talking to RTR about how they could help us pursue this new idea without any expense to us, we chose them as our exclusive location agency. Our primary goals are to do whatever we can to get men, women and children off the streets and help them take their places back into society, leading productive lives."

"I knew Hope Gardens and the downtown URM site were special as soon as Scott Johnson contacted me," said Gary Onyshko, president of RTR. "During our 30 year history in Los Angeles, we have had extensive experience representing multi-building campus-type locations. These days, TV shows are always seeking new ways to keep their costs down by finding properties with a variety of looks so they can shoot multiple scenes in one place. Both of the URM sites have this to offer."

Commenting on a just concluded *Criminal Minds* shoot at Hope Gardens, Jeffrey Spellman noted, "We've been working with RTR and with Scott Johnson, who's a wonderful guy. This was a win win for everyone—they needed extra revenues to help run their terrific programs, and we needed the location. It was a perfect marriage. We always try to give something back to local charities and shooting at Hope Gardens will certainly aid a worthy cause."

Onyshko concluded, "Location managers are great at finding locations to suit their needs, but when we get involved with representing a property, we specialize in marketing it to them in a way that suggests they utilize it for multiple, different looks --not just the obvious ones.

"While it's always exciting to discover a new high profile building and create a successful film program, or get involved with an existing film program and improve upon it, helping the URM raise funds to benefit L.A.'s less fortunate is also very rewarding for us here at RTR – especially at this time of year, when the need seems especially great."