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New Mexico Film Office Supports Training Program for Background Actors

Background Actors Association Bill of Rights Introduced

SANTA FE, NM – Today, the New Mexico Film Office announced support for a new workforce development program, to train New Mexico background workers in the film and television industry. The program, The Industry Forum, will be free to New Mexico residents. Those who participate in the program will learn about the film industry and how to be a professional background actor from experts in the industry.

The Industry Forum is a collaboration between Alessi Hartigan Casting, the Background Actors Association of New Mexico (BAANM), and Hartigan Productions with support from the New Mexico Film Office. Program funding to cover participant costs for The Industry Forum is sourced from workforce development training funds.

"As we continue to see an increase in production activity in our state and a demand for an experienced, set-savvy talent pool, it is essential to provide workforce development programs that build our film and television workforce both on and off screen in order to maintain New Mexico's status as a premiere film and television production destination," said Alicia J. Keyes, Cabinet Secretary of New Mexico's Economic Development Department.

The Industry Forum training program will offer three cumulative course levels from beginner to advanced and will cover topics such as: breaking into background, finding casting calls, submitting for work, getting paid, being a stand in, being a photo double, driving on set, set etiquette, safe set practices, and more. All courses will be virtual but still allow for interfacing with experts including background casting directors. The first class will take place on December 5, 2020.

"Working as a background actor is an excellent way to break into the film industry and can either be a career in itself, or a gateway to other industry careers. This training program will help to create awareness and open the door for New Mexicans to break into the film industry, learn how a set works, network, and get an insider's perspective about the wide array of careers in production. These free classes are taught by industry experts and will give New Mexicans an edge when working in production." said Amber Dodson, New Mexico Film Office Director.

"We believe that in order to grow, we need to grow together. Sande Alessi and I came to New Mexico 4 years ago to set out on a journey to grow, to expand, and to elevate the New Mexico background actor's community to meet higher standards. We are beyond proud of where we are now and the direction we are headed with all talented New Mexicans state-wide. We strive to bridge gaps, provide opportunities and open doors to all of those interested in joining the film industry. Being part of this film community is an honor and we are excited to continue to work and grow with people interested in becoming part of the film history of New Mexico," said Shayne Hartigan, Owner, Alessi Hartigan Casting.

More information on The Industry Forum background actor training program can be found at <https://www.bigmarker.com/casting-new-mexico/Background-Performers-Series> and at CastingNewMexico.com

In conjunction with the launch of The Industry Forum background actor training program, the Background Actors Association of New Mexico (BAANM) has concurrently introduced “The New Mexico Background Actors Bill of Rights”. The purpose of the New Mexico Background Bill of Rights is to ensure background actors in New Mexico are aware and informed of the rights and treatments in which they are entitled. Some of the subject matter includes the right to minimum wage and overtime compensation, the right to a work environment that is safe and free of sexual harassment, discrimination, verbal “bullying” and physical abuse, and the right to be made aware of hazardous working conditions. Each right refers to respective standards and acts from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS).

“The Background Actors Association of New Mexico through education and membership strives to promote professionalism within the Background Talent community. We are excited to have the first Bill of Rights in a non-union market, working with the New Mexico Film Office, OSHA and NMWFS to protect and provide a safe working environment. As the New Mexico film industry continues to attract productions we are pleased to offer a path forward for both established background actors and those who have the desire to be a part of this amazing industry,” said Bobbie Shelton, Background Actors of New Mexico.

BAANM’s New Mexico Background Bill of Rights can be found on the New Mexico Film Office’s website <https://nmfilm.com/resources>

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About Alessi Hartigan Casting: Alessi Hartigan Casting believes that the best producers in the industry should have the best talent! We strive to make community connections and lasting relationships within New Mexico to ensure each and every production gets the talent they need. Together, we believe we can Elevate New Mexico’s performers and shine the spotlight on all the talent that New Mexico has to offer.

About BAANM: The Background Actors of New Mexico (BAANM) is dedicated to enhancing the professionalism of the local background acting community through education, training and positive mentoring. We seek to work with all film industry stakeholders to create an environment that is safe, encouraging, fair and equitable.

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