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With Estrella, a star is born

By Andrea Oliver
MY VIEW

After one has lived in Tallahassee for several years, as I have, she starts to hear some of the same complaints often repeated:

"There's nothing to do here."

"Tallahassee is boring."

"Why can't Tallahassee be more like (Atlanta, Miami or any city of your choice)?"

Those who have lobbed such criticisms will soon have to mute their volume. The development of a novel entertainment and cultural experience is under way, and it promises to make a place that many of us already think is great even better. Anticipation is mounting with each passing day for Estrella: The Tallahassee Film Festival. This three-day celebration of all things film is slated to take place May 15 through 17 next year.

A product of the Knight Creative Communities Initiative, Estrella (pronounced eh-STRAY-ya, Spanish for "star") promises to fill a unique niche in the growing number of local, regional, national and internationally staged film festivals held annually the world over.

Because it seeks to recognize and showcase emerging talent, Estrella's mission will be to expose the community to the many connections the Tallahassee area has with the film industry. With film screenings at multiple citywide venues, and a host of other film-related activities such as movie-making workshops, amateur contests, make-up artistry and music, this three-day affair seeks to provide an outlet for emergent film talents to share their gifts with a community that in turn will be afforded another viable option for cultural and educational enrichment.

KCCI catalyst Jeanne Curtin believes the impact Estrella will have on establishing Tallahassee as a mecca for culture is immeasurable.

"I think the festival will serve as a branch between different groups within the community. It will be the platform that will bridge the communication gaps between the different segments of our community that we have here like our students, our professionals, our local businesses and our government interests," said Curtin, an attorney.

"It's this kind of community-level involvement that will attract members of the creative class, who seek the vibrant environment that our festival will be key in building here."

Curtin was referring to people who make their living creatively - not just in art and music, but in technology, education, government and crafts. They'll be essential in making Tallahassee more economically viable and livable.

The KCCI team spearheading the creation of this event is working diligently to ensure that the festival represents and celebrates the diversity and creativity of this community. Its very name is the result of community involvement, representing the culmination of a naming contest that garnered widespread public response and generated nationwide interest in this endeavor.

"Estrella is an appropriate choice for our city's festival because, if you notice on most maps, the capital city is designated by a star," KCCI catalyst Gloria Pugh said. "Estrella will help Tallahassee to continue to reach for the stars, because, through this initiative, we are hoping to create even bigger stars."

Estrella looks to offer an opportunity for the aspiring young filmmaker to exert her creativity in ways that will affect generations of future artists. It will give novice and amateur filmmakers an avenue to highlight their work. Both goals seem a natural fit for a community with the rich educational resources in a city like ours.