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Carrying a torch for independent films



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By Fraser Sherman, Destin Log, Fla.

Nov. 14--At the debut of South Walton's new film series, first they laughed, then they cried.

"I laughed for the first 90 minutes and cried for the last three," Rosemary Beach town manager and Destin City Councilor Jim Bagby told The Log. "It was funny right until the end, then you realize how sad it is."

The film? "Adopt a Sailor," in which wealthy Manhattan couple Bebe Neuwirth and Peter Coyote invite a Navy sailor home for dinner and the three of them discover the gulf between their different worlds.

The series? The Torchlight Film Series, a Florida State University Film School program sponsored by the towns of 30-A.

A news release said the Torchlight Program was designed to give film students hands-on experience in distributing and marketing movies, but also has the goal of creating "a culture of cinema appreciation in Florida." Program director Paul Cohen has screened a number of independent films in Tallahassee the past few years, often before their national release.

Cohen said the 30-A initiative would allow the film school to share the same films with people outside big cities. Starting with the Oct. 10 showing of "Adopt a Sailor," the program runs for a year, bringing in not only movies but filmmakers and movie experts.

Bagby said Seaside founder Robert Davis and film school Dean Frank Patterson first discussed the idea for Torchlight a couple of years ago. Since then, Seaside, Alys Beach, Rosemary Beach and St. Joe's 30-A developments agreed to pool their resources and jointly put up \$100,000 to fund the program for 12 months.

Bagby said the director, Charles Evered, a Naval reservist and former Pensacola resident, had attended the showing along with an audience of 300 to 400 people.

"It was fabulous ... the right movie for '30-A culture,'" he said. "FSU went over the top with the screen and the projector ... and the quality of the picture and the projection (here) were outstanding."

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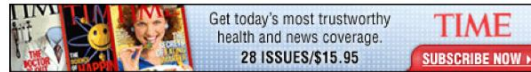
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