

Northeaster

May 6, 2020

Northeast Minneapolis | St. Anthony | Columbia Heights | Hilltop

Vol. 42, No. 9

Eldercare is coping with COVID-19

by Cynthia Sowden

Since February, residents at Catholic Eldercare's senior living facility at 817 Main Street NE have gotten used to eating meals in their rooms and seeing staff dressed head-to-toe in protective garments, including face shields. Staff have become accustomed to speaking through a mask. It's a situation no one likes, but it's necessary.

On April 22, Catholic Eldercare sent out a media advisory from Greg Baumberger, president and CEO. "As of today, we have eight lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our Care Center. There are no active cases in our assisted living or independent living communities. However, it is with great sadness that we announced we have experienced 12 deaths since the virus was first detected. We grieve with the loved ones of those who have succumbed to this deadly virus and extend our prayers to them during this difficult time."

In an April 23 phone interview with the Northeaster, Baumberger said, "In the state of Minnesota, there were 221 new cases since yesterday. We're moving up on the curve. For Catholic Eldercare, the curve arrived sooner."

As at other Minnesota nursing homes, Catholic Eldercare leaders saw the virus race through senior care facilities on the West Coast and began preparing for the worst. They monitored communications from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Minnesota Depart-

ment of Health (MDH). As members of LeadingAge, a trade association of non-profit caregivers that deals with seniors, they took note of best practices and began implementing them as the situation evolved.

"Early on, we stopped visitors from coming onto the premises," said Diane Lucas, Eldercare's director of marketing communications. "The only people coming through our entrances are employees and our vendors." She said the staff is in daily contact with MDH.

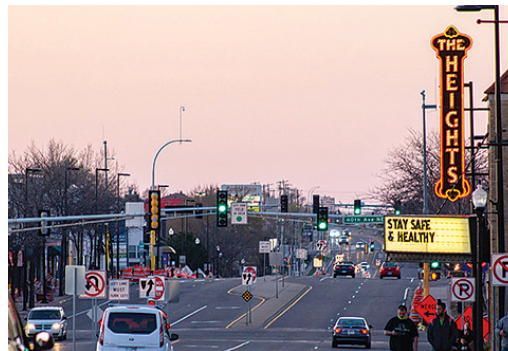
Baumberger added, "All deliveries go to the loading dock. They're held there to minimize the spread of COVID."

He said Eldercare has two nurses on staff who are specialists in infection control. Those two have trained other staff on how to prevent the disease from entering the building.

Lucas said one floor of the 174-bed building has become an "isolation unit" where residents with lab-positive COVID-19 tests are sequestered. "That's the most recent thing we have done to help mitigate the spread," she said.

Baumberger talked about the "complexity" of the coronavirus. "We've tested people who have been negative twice," he said. "Then, on the third test, they're positive." He's encouraged by the efforts of the University of Minnesota and Mayo Clinic to develop antibody testing.

But it's not all gloom and frustration, ELDERCARE ▶ 11



Spring scenes amid new stay-home extension

Joel Bartlett and Kevin Bumgardner of Columbia Heights walked with their dogs Carrol and Gustav at Kordiak Park (Photo by Karen Kraco). Heights Theater remains closed under the governor's orders about gathering (Photo by Nik Linde). Fishing off the dock on Silver Lake (Photo by Carol Jensen).

Philip Harder debuts feature film "Tuscaloosa"

by Liz Jensen

It's August in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1972. Billy, a recent college graduate, works on the grounds of an old world mental institution run by his psychiatrist father. At the end of summer he falls in love with Virginia, one of his father's patients. Meanwhile, Billy's childhood friend Nigel joins fellow activists in the fight against Tuscaloosa's white power elite, which includes Billy's father. Billy finds himself torn between Nigel, his father, and Virginia as tensions rise and mysteries unfold.

"Tuscaloosa," is the first feature-length narrative film from Minneapolis writer and director Philip Harder. Harder has been a longtime creative force behind music videos for artists including Prince, Foo Fighters, and Hilary Duff, as well as commercial clients including Apple, Disney, and Target.

Harder, who lives on the Missis-



Virginia (Natalia Dyer) and Billy (Devon Bostick) meet near the railroad bridge over Tuscaloosa's Black Warrior River, played by the BNSF bridge over the Mississippi on Marshall Street. (Provided photo)

sippi River in Northeast near The Sample Room, filmed the entire movie in Minnesota, including locations around Northeast Minneapolis, Anoka, Northfield, and on the Carleton College campus.

Harder and his film crew shot in many familiar Northeast locations such as the Northrup King

Building, the Mississippi River north of the Broadway bridge, the Frost Building near Broadway and Central, the PNA hall at 13th Avenue and Fourth Street NE, Studio 6, the River Liquor sign (now torn down), and Harder's own house on Marshall Street.

The film "Tuscaloosa" was

adapted by Harder from the novel of the same name by Glasgow Phillips, published in 1994. "I met Glasgow Phillips in Los Angeles 20 years ago after I read his first novel, 'Tuscaloosa,'" said Harder. "I was impressed by Glasgow's natural talent to weave humor and romance with complicated social issues."

Harder and Phillips became friends and talked about the possibility of bringing "Tuscaloosa" to the screen someday. But it wasn't until 2016 that the idea became reality. After Phillips hinted that his novel was available for a screen adaptation, Harder made his move. "I took the leap and we finally shot the movie a couple years later," said Harder. "While shooting, I always relied on my memory of my first read because I couldn't predict what would happen in the story," he said. "That's what I hoped to capture for the audience."

Natalia Dyer (Stranger Things) plays Virginia, a patient at a mental institution. Tate Donovan (Argo), plays the lead character's psychiatrist father. Devon Bostick (The 100), plays Billy, the lead. Rapper YG (Def Jam recording artist), plays a civil rights activist. And Marchánt Davis (The Day Shall Come), plays Nigel, Billy's childhood friend.

"Our casting agent Bess Fifer from New York cast the kids in 'Stranger Things,' so she had a connection to Natalia Dyer, who plays Virginia, a complicated character thrown into a mental institution against her will," said Harder. Harder said Virginia is an unpredictable character who is challenging to play, "She blurs the line between sanity and youthful wild living."

Harder said the character of Virginia reminded him of the character McMurphy, played by Jack

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Film transforms modern MN to '70s Alabama

1 ◀ TUSCALOOSA

Nicholson in the 1975 film, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." "Like McMurphy, Virginia may be wild, but is she really crazy? Should she be institutionalized? Can she escape? I found myself cheering for her as the outcast," he said. "Would she meet a tragic end like McMurphy's lobotomy?"

Tate Donovan, who plays Billy's psychiatrist father was the first actor they cast. "Tate's long career as a respected actor legitimized our production," said Harder. Donovan spoke with Harder about the script's controversial issues — race and war and how these issues remain relevant today. "Tate mentioned he was intrigued by the challenge of the role because he would not be playing an obvious villain which tends to be the case when dealing with racial issues," said Harder. Donovan also became an executive producer of the film.

The day after casting Donovan, Harder found himself doing a Skype call with Devon Bostick, who was suddenly interested in playing the lead, Billy. Harder said Bostick's agent must have been in touch with Donovan. "I guess it just shows how casting name actors sometimes works," said Harder. "Even though we were outside the Hollywood studio system, we were able to cast well, which was the best thing that could have happened to our film."

Harder said Bostick and Dyer arrived a couple days before the shoot and he gave them access to his house so they could rehearse and get to know one another. "On those two days they really fell into their characters and Alabama accents," he said.

Rap star YG plays Antoine, a recent Vietnam veteran turned Black Panther. "YG was impressed by the activist role and let me know this character related to the same political issues he was rapping about in his music," said Harder. "Plus he thought it would be damn cool to play a Black Panther in a leather coat cruising the Alabama countryside on a two-stroke 1968 Yamaha."

So what was it like turning today's Minnesota into 1972 Alabama for the film? Since Tuscaloosa today looks nothing like it did in 1972, they decided to use the Hollywood tradition of "faking" locations. "It's common for Hollywood to recreate locations and time periods all over the world," said Harder, "I thought if Hollywood can do it, why not Minneapolis?"

Harder explained to the producers that if they shot in Minneapolis they could put all of their budget on the screen and create and control the locations. The producers also saw benefits of using familiar locations and the chance to work with professional Minneapolis film crews they were all familiar with. "We all live in Northeast Minneapolis, so we knew many vintage Northeast locations right

in our backyard," said Harder. "One such location was literally the backyard of my home, but I'll let you guess which it is."

According to Patrick Riley, one of the producers for "Tuscaloosa," 80% of the film's budget went back into the Twin Cities economy for film production, rentals, editing, special effects and sound design. "Dozens of restaurants, hotels and car rental companies benefited from the production and over 100 crew and another 75 plus local actors and extras were involved in the making of this film," said Riley.

The film takes place from August to the election of November 1972, so figuring out how to capture the changing seasons was important. Harder studied autumn foliage in Tuscaloosa and spoke about how the fall colors reminded him of Minnesota. "Our fall starts a month earlier," said Harder, "so we shot in October, trying to chase the unpredictable autumn colors."

However, since movies are shot out of chronological order, Harder said they had to use special effects to turn fall colors green at the beginning of the movie and pointed their cameras toward evergreens whenever possible. "By the climactic end, the woods are 'on fire' in rich yellow, orange and red fall colors. By Hollywood standards that would have been impossible to create."

Tuscaloosa, Alabama, is 16 hours from Minneapolis by car. Comparisons between the two places might seem unlikely, unless you're Harder, who found that the Mississippi River in Northeast was the perfect replica for Alabama's Black Warrior River and used the train bridge on 18th Avenue and Marshall Street in Northeast as Tuscaloosa's iconic train bridge.

Downtown Northfield, Minn., was also made to look like downtown Tuscaloosa, and according to Harder, seemed to be stuck in time once they parked vintage cars throughout. "With some effects we added a few Tuscaloosa landmarks such as the iconic Bama movie theater with 1972 movies on the marquee."

"The achievement of this production is a testament to the talent, experience and resources of the Minnesota film production community, as well as the diverse locations that are available here in our state," said Riley.

Political events throughout the film often remind the viewer of similarities to today's political climate. "Our nation's most infamous racist governor was George Wallace of Alabama, whose stand in the schoolhouse door at the University in Tuscaloosa made national news in 1963," said Harder, talking about when Wallace attempted to block the first black students from entering the university. "JFK sent in the National Guard and Wallace had to step aside," he said, "but George Wallace was a gifted



Phil Harder (glasses) checks the monitor while filming in Northfield.

(Provided photo)

politician who knew his racist tactics would appeal to his base."

The opening scene of "Tuscaloosa" takes the viewer through a montage of Alabama news footage from the 1960's to 1972 when George Wallace was shot five times while campaigning for President. "Our current president embraced Wallace's 'law and order' campaign, an extremely loud dog whistle for keeping white power in charge," said Harder, "which is also one of the backstories of our movie."

"Tuscaloosa" is distributed in North America by Cinedigm Corp. and recently had a limited theatrical release cut short by the pandemic. The film was also going to be a part of the 2020 Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival (MSPIFF) which has been postponed until further notice.

However, the film's distributor has arranged for it to be released on digital and on-demand, including Apple TV and Amazon so viewers can watch the film from home.

"Tuscaloosa" is a competitive movie on an international level, and we hope

this film can shine a light on the potential for high-quality productions to shoot in Minnesota, and for the State of Minnesota to strongly consider reinstating a tax credit to incentivize productions to stay here, or come here, and not travel to Atlanta or other markets," said Riley. "Filmmaking is a natural expansion to our already established commercial and visual arts economy."

Info and movie trailer: tuscaloosamovie.com, [youtube.com/watch?v=A8Tu_ZSamFk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8Tu_ZSamFk).

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