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SOUTHERN MINNESOTA TOURISM ASSOCIATION SHOWCASES REGION FOR FILM & TELEVISION INDUSTRY

(New Ulm, Minnesota – December 11, 2006) -- The Southern Minnesota Tourism Association hosted a tour of southern Minnesota in recent weeks for the Minnesota Film & TV Board (MFTVB) to showcase what the region has to offer the film and television industry.

“We wanted to show sites that are conducive to television and film as well as find out what we need to provide to be a film-friendly town,” said Terry Sveine, of the New Ulm Convention and Visitors Bureau, who was one of the hosts of the tour. In addition, Southern Minnesota was represented by Mary Gastner of the Rochester Convention and Visitors Bureau; Tom Watson of Western Minnesota Prairie Waters; and April Gangestad of the Slayton Chamber of Commerce.

More than 40 cities participated, offering up a view of diverse locations from waterfalls to caves, from Main Streets to monuments, from the Mississippi River Valley to Bluff Country, and from prairies to sod houses.

The Minnesota Film & TV Board was represented by Christopher Grap, production services manager, whose responsibilities include ensuring that Minnesota communities have a good experience hosting a film or television production and that production companies working in the state also experience world-class service and support on their locations.

Because film companies incur additional costs for lodging and travel when filming outside any metropolitan area, host communities need to offer some unique geography, hospitable residents and retailers as well as a strong sense of community, said Grap.

“Southwestern Minnesota offers land untouched by time, including vast prairies, historic main streets, as well as no air traffic noise or interstate noise,” Grap added. “South Central Minnesota has fantastic lakes and farmland, and the people take great pride in their heritage. Southeastern Minnesota has Bluff Country, the Mississippi River, and Rochester offers industry. There is a great diversity of locations for production in southern Minnesota.”

The Southeast cities rolling out the red carpet for the Minnesota Film & TV Board were: Red Wing, Wabasha, Winona, Lanesboro, Rochester, Mantorville, Owatonna, Faribault and Northfield.

In South Central Minnesota, Grap spent time touring New Prague, Waseca, Austin, Albert Lea, Blue Earth, Fairmont, Mankato, St. Peter, New Ulm, Sleepy Eye, Redwood Falls and Hutchinson.

In Southwest Minnesota, Grap visited Willmar, Ortonville, Montevideo (location for the critically acclaimed film Sweet Land, which opened around the country in October), Granite Falls, Hanley Falls, Walnut Grove, Lake Benton, Pipestone and Luverne.

“A tour like this helps us assess a community’s level of interest in working with a film or television production,” Grap said. “It also helps us establish relationships in Minnesota towns and communities should we have a special request from an out-of-state production company in the future.”

“The economic benefit of having a film shoot in a community is significant. For example, the economic impact of the Warner Bros. film “North Country” on the Iron Range totaled nearly \$5 million in the months that community hosted the production company,” noted Lucinda Winter, executive director of the Minnesota Film and TV Board.

“These kinds of tours allow us to provide guidance to Minnesota communities interested in making themselves more marketable as a potential location,” Winter added. “We’ll be touring central and northern Minnesota in 2007.”

About the Minnesota Film & TV Board

The Minnesota Film & TV Board is a nonprofit public-private partnership funded by the State of Minnesota and private contributions. Its mission is to promote the art and commerce of the moving image industry in Minnesota. For more information, visit the MFTVB website at www.mnfilmandtv.org or call 651-645-3600.