

Opinion: Tahoe the talk of Hollywood

By Carol Chaplin

This past week is one for the record books in South Lake Tahoe. I know, you're thinking record temperatures, attendance at one of our special events or our filled-to-capacity lake. All wrong – I'm referring to ABC's Emmy Award-winning hit TV comedy series "Modern Family" and the filming of the show's season premiere here at South Shore.



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Now in its ninth season, the television mockumentary sitcom follows the lives of an extended family living in suburban Los Angeles. This year's premiere is centered around a joint houseboat vacation on Lake Tahoe. The episode is scheduled to air on ABC Sept. 27.

How does a hit television series go on location? It takes partnerships and coordination. A lot of coordination.

It all started with a call from Kathleen Dodge with the El Dorado County Film Commission to us/LTVA to explain the opportunity. She worked tirelessly with LTVA team and partners on strategy meetings, phone calls, emails, text messages, scouting trips, planning, etc. Dodge also worked with the production team to secure permits through the U.S. Forest Service, coordinated with Matt Green of California State

Parks, and the El Dorado Service Office Marine Division. She had the support from El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel as well as El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce CEO Laurel Brent-Bumb and director of tourism, Jody Franklin.

In initial planning stages, Dodge had a site visit brunch at Riva Grill with "Modern Family's" creative team to showcase the destination. Councilmember Tom Davis, local photographer Tim White, and Greg Almos with El Dorado County Sheriff's Office joined them to brainstorm turning this into reality.

Our team assisted with Dodge for cast/crew accommodations and leveraging local business involvement in South Shore/El Dorado County. All of this gave us an up close behind the scenes look at how Hollywood magic really happens.

The Lodge at Edgewood Tahoe was headquarters for the cast during their week of shooting, while the crew made Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel their home away from home. Camp Richardson's marina became a set staging area as the cast took over the resort's marina duplex for hair and makeup, and added barges, boats, Jet Skis, and security. Bob Hasset and team at the marina were flexible, patient and accommodating. The production crew of approximately 150 people were amazing, courtesy and the kind of guests you dream of working with.

Word that the celebrities were in town started to spread as the cast and crew expressed their awe of Lake Tahoe on their personal social media accounts, starting with actress Julie Bowen's Instagram post of a Tahoe sunset from Edgewood Lodge the night of her arrival, tagging it simply, "Ok, Tahoe. You got me."

Sofia Vergara, who plays Gloria Pritchett on the show has 13 million-plus Instagram followers and posted 20-plus images/video on her channel with majority of posts garnering a minimum of 100K likes each. The cast enjoyed South Shore's offerings during their time off including mountain biking,

escaping Trapped in Tahoe's rooms, dining, and sunsets. Jesse Tyler Ferguson sang the destination's praises at the end with, "Lake Tahoe, you have been amazing."

These posts did not go unnoticed by journalists and resulted in national media stories about the filming including Travel + Leisure, Hollywood Reporter and UK Daily Mail.

You can't buy this kind of exposure – it would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Through the EDC Film Commission and our local partners, we will continue to garner millions of impressions of our incredible destination.

And the show just keeps on giving. A "Modern Family Supporting Local Families" themed-airing party will benefit Tahoe Women's Community Fund on Sept. 27. The evening includes viewing the premiere, featuring South Lake Tahoe, raffle prizes, snacks and beverages for purchase at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel, from 7:30-9:30pm. Tickets are available for \$20 in advance by emailing khaven@gmail.com.

We look forward to exploring more partnerships with the film commission. We already knew South Shore was a star. Now where's our Emmy?

Carol Chaplin is CEO and president of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority.