



Three times a charm

Thomasville Georgia's Third Annual Covey Film Festival line up looks to be the best ever.

WRITTEN BY DIDI HOFFMAN

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Award winning films, outstanding speakers and workshops, plus a visit from one 'sizzling' fireman gives charm a new definition. Covey's Masked Quail Ball highlights the week of October 8th – 17th at different venues throughout town. All proceeds benefit The Thomasville Community Resource Center (TCRC) which provides afterschool academic and enrichment to over 350 local students.

Independent films are shown at Toronto, Sundance, Tribeca and other film festivals, to woo distribution companies to purchase and then bring the films to the mainstream audience. Covey Ambassadors Jane Fonda and Frank Hall Green attended many of the festivals on the lookout for world class films to be screened in Thomasville. When they saw films that followed the Covey theme, Nature, Community and Caring, they called Sharon Maxwell Ferguson, Chair of the festival and Board President of the TCRC. Her committee, along with Lisa Billups, Executive Director of the TCRC and Didi Hoffman, reviewed the films and then the thankless task of receiving permission to screen them was taken on by Denice Jarrett. Permission is not easily granted, a festival has to be vetted and prove itself worthy in the distributor's eyes. Happily, Denice received permission for all Covey top choices.

Two important movies, *Virunga* and *Wolfpack*, were at the top of the list and are not to be missed. Both won major festival awards and *Wolfpack* happened to be produced by Louise Ingalls Sturges, niece of Thomasville's Kathy Vignos and TCRC board member. Covey did not select *Wolfpack* because of the relationship. *Wolfpack* was selected because it

is a compelling story in line with the theme of Community and Caring.

Another important movie at this year's festival is *The Good Lie*, starring Reese Witherspoon. This story is about the Lost Boys of Sudan who were brought to America to start a new life after fleeing on foot for years between South Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya. One of the Lost Boys,



Inspirational speaker 'Lost Boy' Jacob Atem

Jacob Atem, a PhD candidate at the University of Florida and TED talk speaker, will discuss his journey and answer questions after the film. His story is inspirational.

At eight years old, Jacob and 20,000 boys walked thousands of miles, through lion and crocodile country, eating mud to stave off thirst and hunger, while fleeing armed rebels who killed their families and were out to kill them. Over half of the boys died on the journey to anywhere to find safety. Found in a refugee camp in Kenya, Jacob Atem was sent to Michigan to begin a new life. Along with speaking to the audience about *The Good Lie* during the festival, Jacob will also visit students of the TCRC during the day to tell his story and inspire many children locally. Mary Williams, who spoke at last year's festival helped found The Lost Boys chapter in Atlanta.

For animals lovers, *The Wound and the Gift* offers a beautiful documentary about who saves whom when animals are rescued. Carol Jones, of Miss Kitty's Feline Sanctuary, will speak after the movie in honor of these animals and to discuss the 10 year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and how it changed animal rescue around the United States and more specifically, in Southwest Georgia.

Sizzle comes to Covey when actor Nico Evers-Swindell, Prince William in *William & Kate*, Prince Kenneth in *Grimm* and now the "hot" fireman on Alka Seltzer's TV commercials –joins the Covey Film Festival to sign autographs and pose for pictures October 17th.

Nico lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Thomasville native, actress Megan Ferguson, and was a lawyer in New Zealand when the acting bug hit him. In a recent interview, Nico explained he knew he wanted to be an actor when "I first made people laugh, the feeling was infectious, uncovering a truth together, making a discovery, creating a bond. That's the pull."

A young working actor, Nico is seen in many productions, but not yet a household name. His road to success in the film industry is one of very hard work and determination, not for the faint hearted. "Never give up" says Nico to would be actors "trust your instincts and ignore the stage directions."

Two working actors in a family create some special memories and Nico's fondest is "working with my wife Megan on a pilot for television. Seeing her work and feeling so proud." He also talks about a scene he filmed in Times Square for *Manhattan Love Story*. Nico remembers the time vividly, "That was special because I started acting in New York City."

Fundraising centerpiece for Covey Film Festival is its signature Masked Quail Ball Gala, sponsored by Southwest Georgia Farm Credit and chaired by Lauren Fielding and co-chair Martha Reynolds. Featured highlights include the Covey Stars under the Stars Cocktail reception on the bricks, leading up to the Ballroom in the Broad Street Exchange Building for dinner and dancing. Terri Vismale-Morris is producing outstanding A-list Auction filled with incredible industry packages and items never seen before! Both silent and live will fill the room for the TCRC benefit.



The Covey Masked Quail Ball celebrates the Red Hills Region and the Children of the TCRC.

There are many more movies and events on the Covey schedule. Full descriptions and trailers can be found on their website www.coveyfilmfestival.com. Covey also joins forces with Thomasville Landmarks, The Thomas County Museum of History, Tall Timbers Research Station and Miss Kitty's Feline Sanctuary for some very special movie events which are close to the heart of Thomasville, Georgia.

Passes to the October 8 - 17th festival and tickets to the Gala and other events are available online at www.coveyfilmfestival.com.



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