

PEACHCRAFT

ACTORS STUDIO

Article

Casting Agent Opens Movie Studio in Summit

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By Francine Cohen

It's a good rule of thumb to try and live life following the golden rule. That's pretty sure to guarantee you'll get along with most people. But simply getting along doesn't ensure happiness or success these days. So to find your own personal happiness and success, climb two flights of stairs where, at the top, you'll learn the golden PeachCraft rule ... success is cultivated through commitment, drive, and focus. And, oh yes, connections.

Perched above Springfield Avenue in Summit, PeachCraft, a movie studio, is a haven and incubator for actors, creative talent and business people alike. Acting students are offered comprehensive training in stage, film, and television acting, and business leaders focus their efforts on effective speaking, presentations and corporate development. Filling a unique niche in the area, local resident Kate Kennedy developed the studio shortly after her return from the West Coast, where she spent numerous years as an acting coach, actress, and casting director with multiple feature films and hundreds of commercials to her credit.

Kennedy didn't intend to start PeachCraft when she came home for a family visit, but family ties were strong and led Kennedy to stay. She remarked, "Staying here wasn't my goal when I came to visit in December, as a matter of fact, my cat is still in Los Angeles. But it's so good to be around family and I've enjoyed helping out at the inn." Kennedy referred to the Parrot Mill Inn in Chatham where her mother is the long-time owner and manager.

Helping out at the inn was satisfying for a while for this entertainment industry insider and former chef, but certainly not enough of a challenge for Kennedy, who exudes non-stop positive, infectious energy. She explains the beginnings of PeachCraft, "Long-time friend Debbie Gillette Hennessy, president and creative director of the Chatham Playhouse, was really the one who suggested I teach acting workshops to the community."

With Kennedy's credentials as a Michael Chekhov Institute certified instructor in training and her many years working in the entertainment business, it made sense. And so, last June, Kennedy became the founder and artistic director of PeachCraft LLC. The company has multiple divisions; PeachCraft Actors Studio, PeachCraft Corporate Image Development, a management division that is taking shape with partner Charlie Matthau in Los Angeles and a production arm in which Kennedy's partner is Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Famer Stephen Ferrone of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. All of these endeavors make Kennedy one very busy bi-coastal and successful entrepreneur. Remaining plugged into the Los Angeles-based entertainment industry while living in New Jersey comes easy to Kennedy. She noted, "With technology being what it is today, I have so many options. I can cast here or fly out there for whatever time is necessary. It's so easy to be bi-coastal; it's almost like being invisible. Which is great because even though I'm not in Los Angeles I still want to remain in the game, and I can."

Kennedy, with her on-the-go demeanor, is anything but invisible. She is the driving force behind the success of PeachCraft. She explained how she is focused on guiding people toward discovering their innate ability to present the best, most believable, though-provoking image possible. That holds true for both her acting students and the business people she and Corporate Image division head Katherine Ng coach.

Kennedy and Ng want their students to project a strong image, whether it's while standing in front of a camera or at the front of a conference room. Kennedy and Ng noted that it's all about standards and excellence in the quality of the work, as well as the quality of the individual. Kennedy continued, "It's all about commitment, drive and focus. If you're not driven, you're not going anywhere, if you're not focused you're not going in the right direction."

In describing her focus for the acting studio, Kennedy commented, "I'm about the passion. I realize it's a major commitment both for the actors and their families." Kennedy certainly understands, and has lived the commitment to one's passion.

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