

‘The Razor’s Edge’ films in northern Michigan

By Alexandra Dailey Special to the Record-Eagle
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Tiffany McQueer of Project Feed the Kids, Inc. filmed with Keith Famie at their J&S Hamburg on South Airport location. Photos special to the Record-Eagle/Keith Famie

TRAVERSE CITY — Director, producer, author, and celebrity chef Keith Famie, along with his Visionalist Entertainment Production team, visited Traverse City and Leelanau to film footage for “The Razor’s Edge,” a PBS documentary highlighting the daily lives of those who face poverty and homelessness.

“The Razor’s Edge” will show viewers what a day in the life is like for individuals who live on the razor’s edge of society, facing poverty with no place but the streets to call home.

Although the documentary is based out of Detroit, with a focus on the churches and organizations that care for the homeless and those without enough food, the film incorporates a range of cultural perspectives, including those of large urban cities and rural locales around the country.

While in northern Michigan, Famie and his team met with several organizations striving to help the poverty-stricken and homeless.

Michelle and Bill White, founders of 5Loaves2FishNMI, were interviewed about their organization’s work as an outreach group that promotes social justice and provides homemade meals to anyone experiencing food insecurity and homelessness.

“No questions are asked of anyone,” said Michelle White. “The big thing is to maintain dignity. You are in a circumstance. I just want to be there to help you.”

Leelanau Christian Neighbors is also featured in the documentary and offers several programs to help community members in their time of need. Blessings in a Backpack is one such program that feeds school-age children who receive meals through the federally funded Free and Reduced Meal Program.

“Our mission is to ‘serve residents of Leelanau County by aiding those with inadequate resources,’” said Mary Stanton, executive director of Leelanau Christian Neighbors. “We hope that with the food we distribute, we are making a huge difference in the lives of our neighbors.”

HomeStretch Nonprofit Housing Corporation, Northwest Michigan Coalition to End Homelessness, Project Feed the Kids, Inc., and Goodwill Northern Michigan are some of the other featured organizations in the documentary. Ryan Hannon, Goodwill Northern

Michigan’s community engagement officer, took part in a filmed interview, and then together, Hannon and Famie visited a homeless camp in Traverse City.

“I’m grateful for Keith’s willingness to show the world the realities of what people who are homeless go through via ‘The Razor’s Edge,’” said Hannon. “We were able to help Keith and his team get a glimpse of homelessness in our area. I hope this film can increase understanding of the complex issue of homelessness, as well as break stigma and increase empathy for people going through it.”

“I feel it’s important to give a voice to those who have found themselves in what most of us would view as an unimaginable situation,” said Famie. “As important as that story is, the story of those who choose to do this outreach work is equally important. This helps the audience understand what efforts are being made and why these people chose to spend their lives helping those who have slipped through the cracks of society. For these are the true unsung heroes taking care of those who are often viewed by society as lost souls who don’t deserve help.”

Known as a celebrity chef and metro Detroit restaurateur, Famie was also a finalist on “Survivor, the Australian Outback” and the host of his own Food Network series — “Keith Famie’s Adventures” — before he dove headfirst into filmmaking.

For nearly two decades, Famie has been immersed in the realm of documentary filmmaking, helping people tell their stories through films like “Those on the Front

Lines of Cancer” or “Chromosomally Enhanced: What’s Your Superpower?” which took a deep dive into the lives of those living and thriving with Down syndrome. His Visionalist Entertainment Productions resonate with a broad audience and garnered 12 Michigan Emmys, among other awards and nominations.

“I’m drawn to the inspiring perseverance of those facing complicated, often misunderstood journeys. Homelessness and food insecurity are so complex, with a multitude of degrees and levels,” added Famie. “My intention with this film is to help society understand that we all live on the razor’s edge. A few catastrophic circumstances can send your life or a loved one’s life into extreme poverty or homelessness if you don’t have a support network.”

By visiting these organizations and interviewing the individuals who run them, “The Razor’s Edge” will be able to address numerous issues, including what defines poverty and homelessness, how someone becomes homeless, what role mental health plays in homelessness, and how society views homelessness.

“The chance to work with Keith Famie on ‘The Razor’s Edge’ provides us the opportunity to educate a larger audience on the complexities of homelessness and food insecurity and what we can do to make big change,” said White, who helped provide 10,300 meals in 2022 to those in need through 5Loaves2FishNMI. “It is our hope and prayer that, through Keith’s documentary, we can begin to not only educate society on the many issues of homelessness and food insecurity but begin to connect the dots, pulling both public and private sectors together to address not only the symptoms but also the causes.”

To learn more about ‘The Razor’s Edge’ journey and how to become a supporter, visit therazorsedgefilm.com.