



COURTESY PHOTO

Erich Rettstadt, son of Charlie Rettstadt and Tina DeMoore of Petoskey, is currently a student at New York University where he's working on his senior film, "Basis of Decision." Erich plans to shoot several scenes in Petoskey next spring.

Petoskey grad bringing film shoot to Petoskey

Erich Rettstadt, a senior at New York University and a 2007 Petoskey High School graduate, will bring film students and professionals from all over the world to Petoskey next spring to shoot his original musical "Basis of Decision," a film about a small town high school debate team. Rettstadt and his team will descend upon Petoskey March 29-April 11.

"After reaching the semifinal round of state debate finals in my junior year at Petoskey High School, it occurred to me that the somewhat off kilter world of debate would provide both an interesting and entertaining backdrop for a film," said Rettstadt. "I committed then and there to make an incredibly unique, wildly entertaining musical movie experience unlike any other — a no holds barred singing and dancing extravaganza about high school policy debate."

"Basis of Decision" follows the journey of high school senior Blake Johnson as he competes to win the state debate competition and a four year college scholarship that goes hand in hand with the championship trophy. Using original musical numbers in the style of 1950s movies such as "Singin' in the Rain" and "An American in Paris," Blake and his teammates sing and dance their way through the tournament finals, baring their emotions to reach the previously inconceivable possibility of a state championship. The script is about overcoming obstacles, and relishing

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in the indescribable "x-factor" of sheer joy that comes after the hurdles are jumped and the finish line is crossed.

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The team filming "Basis of Decision" in Northern Michigan will include more than 50 film students and professionals from throughout the United States and international locales such as Moscow, Paris, Sydney and Beijing. Their film experience includes work with Spike Lee, Brett Ratner (of "Rush Hour" fame) and the Farrelly Brothers, to name a few. Team members have also been a part of Student Academy Award winning films and video shoots with Mariah Carey and Kylie Minogue, among others. These filmmakers will live in Northern Michigan during the 12-day shoot and share their cultures and expertise with students and community members.

For his senior film, Rettstadt brings three and a half years of training and field experience

to the project. Since arriving at New York University, he has written and directed 12 films. Both his freshman ("Woman in Black") and sophomore ("Virginville") films were selected by film professors for inclusion in annual NYU Student Film Showcases. His junior film, "Once A Year," is currently in post-production.

As a sophomore at NYU, Rettstadt founded Tisch New Theatre (TNT), which is now one of the largest theater organizations on campus with more than 900 student members. In 2009, he directed TNT's main stage production at the Skirball Center for Performing Arts, the largest theater south of 42nd Street in Manhattan, for which he fundraised and managed a budget of \$25,000. Earlier this year, he was the executive producer of the TNT main stage show, which had a soldout theatrical run, a budget of \$16,000 and a free public performance at the Arch in Washington Square that he negotiated with New York City. As a result of his work with TNT, Rettstadt was named one of the 15 Most Influential New York University Students by the Washington Square News in 2009 and received a 2010 President's Ser-

vice Award from NYU president John Sexton.

A "Basis of Decision" film fund has been established at the Petoskey Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation to receive tax deductible donations to support the effort to bring this nonprofit film shoot and accompanying opportunity for area students and community members to Northern Michigan. Contributions should include a notation that they are directed to the "Basis of Decision" film fund. A detailed prospectus regarding the film is available upon request at BasisOfDecision@gmail.com. Various hometown fundraisers for the film are also in the works with details to be publicized as they become available.

Rettstadt is also seeking community support to provide homestays for all members of the film cast and crew during the shoot. Efforts are also under way to identify students and community members interested in being extras in select scenes in the film. There may also be openings for extra dancers. Community members interested in any of these opportunities should e-mail their area(s) of interest along with contact information to BasisOfDecision@gmail.com.

"As a filmmaker," Rettstadt said, "my primary goal is to entertain my audience. When I go to the movies, I want to be swept off my feet into another thrilling world I would not otherwise be able to experience. With my senior thesis movie, I aim to do just that."