

Business

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AMY MORTENSEN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tracie Wilson, senior vice president of programming and development for NBCUniversal, poses for a photo next to the Stamford media center productions sign at the Rich Forum on Thursday. "The tax credit incentive is what brought us here," Wilson said.

Capitalizing on incentives

Stamford: NBCUniversal, local economy reap benefits from tax breaks for film industry

By Peter Healy
Correspondent

NBCUniversal, lured to Connecticut's 30 percent tax break for film and television production, is celebrating its third year of syndicated talk-show success at the Rich Forum in Stamford.

The "Jerry Springer Show," "The Steve Wilkos Show" and "Maury," featuring Maury Povich, next month plan to start filming their third season at the city's Rich Forum on Atlantic Street.

"The tax credit incentive is what brought us here," said Tracie Wilson, senior vice president of programming and development for NBCUniversal's domestic television distribution. "Stamford has all the resources we need to do these types of shows in terms

of restaurants and hotels, and the mall is across the street."

In 2009, the company moved the Springer and Wilkos shows from Chicago and "Maury" from New York City to the Rich Forum. NBC took advantage of the tax incentive that Connecticut began in 2008 to attract and retain film, TV and other media companies. The shows employ about 230 people in Stamford, at the Rich Forum and at facilities on Bank Street and Landmark Square.

The recently passed state budget keeps the credits intact, but limits the amount that may be transferred in a year, eventually to 25 percent of the cost of production. It also requires studios to shoot at least half of their production in state.

The NBC TV operations, in turn, benefited the local economy, according to data compiled by NBCUniversal.

In 15 months, the shows drew more than 8,214 guests and 115,000 live audience members to downtown Stamford. Those guests spent \$1.1 million at area businesses.

NBCUniversal has spent more than \$14 million with Connecticut-based vendors in the last 15 years of production.

"A lot of positive collateral activity has come from their being here," said Laure Aubuchon, Stamford's economic development director.

Jack Condlin, president of the Stamford Chamber of Commerce, added, "I am hopeful that NBC will expand beyond the three programs and maybe give us a prime-time program."

He might get his wish.

"We are very aggressive in developing a fourth show to bring to Stamford," said Wilson, 41, a Darien resident. "But I can't talk specifics about that."

TV and video production companies in Stamford include NBC's Olympics and digital media operations; Televerse Studios; the YES Network, which broadcasts Yankees baseball games; and A&E Television Networks, which includes the A&E Network, History Channel and Biography Channel.