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As the owners of Studio Concierge, Crystal McAlerney (left) and Joyce Smith provide actors and film crews with everything they need to get the job done on blockbuster productions here in the Duke City.

## The Star Treatment

Helping television and movie stars feel at ease in ABQ is priority number “fun” for Joyce Smith and Crystal McAlerney.

**W**hen you're responsible for keeping actors and their production crews happy, not every day is easy behind the gates at Albuquerque Studios. It's a challenge fit for only the finest people-pleasers. And networking? That takes on a whole new level of importance in this industry, according to Studio Concierge co-owner Joyce Smith.

"I've had calls where crews asked for a coyote, a rattlesnake, and a jackrabbit," she says. "And we got those animals on set the next day."

Tracking down desert animals may sound like an odd request, but it's business as usual for Smith, who founded Studio Concierge as a "one-stop shop" for stars and crews filming productions at Albuquerque Studios.

"When they need to book houses, hotels, rental cars, massage therapists, or nannies, all they need to do is call one number or send out an e-mail," says Studio Concierge co-owner Crystal McAlerney. "And we take care of them."

Smith noticed a need for a concierge company while working as president of her own corporate accommodations business, Southwest Suites.

When Albuquerque's movie and television production exploded in popularity around the mid-2000s, Smith's

phone started ringing off the hook. On the other end were production coordinators, frantically searching for temporary housing for stars and crew who were coming to town for productions.

That gave Smith an idea. In 2007, she opened Studio Concierge on a second-floor office at Albuquerque Studios to provide production crews with everything they need.

"That's why we're here," she says. "We're the local, knowledgeable source for them to get anything they need quickly, and at the best pricing."

By acting as a liaison to local services, Studio Concierge takes the weight off the shoulders of production coordinators tasked with keeping things running smoothly, Smith says.

McAlerney, a former production coordinator, found that quality invaluable while shooting in Albuquerque. Back

when the film incentives first started, crew members were still hard to come by, and many—including McAlerney herself—traveled here from Los Angeles.

"We were being flown in to work on one movie, living in hotels for three months, and then going back home to LA," she says. "I did that for a year or two."

While working on *The Spirit*, McAlerney requested help from Studio Concierge.

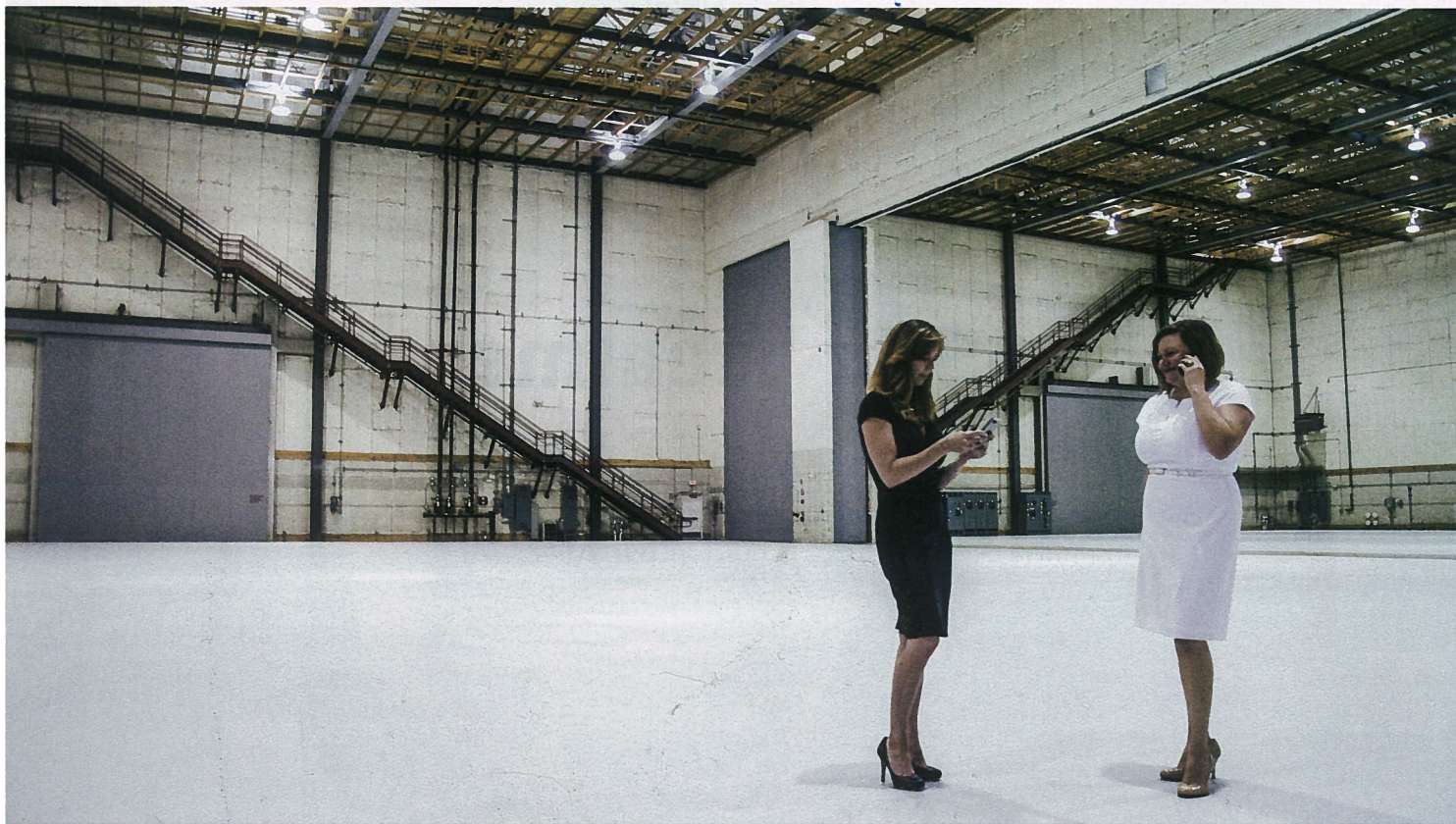
"Because they made my job so much easier, I used them for every single movie I've ever done since," she says. "That includes *Due Date*, *True Grit*, and *We're the Millers*."

And when Smith approached McAlerney about coming onboard as a co-owner of the concierge service in March, McAlerney's answer was a resounding "Yes."

"I needed another key person, and McAlerney has the ideal background because she worked in the film industry," Smith says.

McAlerney says a good concierge service can be invaluable to production coordinators, especially for requests that fall outside the normal scope of business.

"We've had really unique requests, like one for exotic dancers," Smith says,



laughing. “If we don’t have something, we’ll find it so coordinators don’t have to, and then we negotiate on their behalf.”

It doesn’t matter if it’s rodeo clowns, yoga classes, childcare, rent-a-cowboys, or caterers.

“From the perspective of a coordinator, everything is so urgent, it has to happen immediately,” McAlerney says, referencing her former career.

Knowing the little things are taken care of goes a long way behind the camera, and Studio Concierge has built up a reputation for consistency among the state’s 13 or so production coordinators, McAlerney says.

They’ve also gained a rep for confidentiality, which means if you’re hoping to learn about the off-camera lives of your favorite stars, you’re out of luck.

“We don’t name drop,” Smith says. “But we do have wonderful experiences with all of our celebrities.”

While it’s hard to put a finger on exactly how much money the film industry pumps into Albuquerque’s economy, Smith says Studio Concierge has carved out a unique niche in our film community, and has expanded three times since opening.

“With what we do, we’re able to see all the small businesses that we reach out

to—and need—grow as well,” Smith says.

For example, an actor recently requested a specific type of fresh caviar. None could be found in town, so Smith and McAlerney asked Seattle Fish Company of New Mexico—a local wholesaler—to ship some in, instead.

And the spending isn’t limited to within the studio gates. When actors and crews come to Albuquerque, they spend their free time patronizing local businesses, Smith says. Actors and crew explore the city. They indulge in New Mexican food, and they order rounds at local bars and lounges. While they’re getting to know the Land of Enchantment, they’re also stimulating the local economy, Smith says.

“It’s so fantastic for our economy,” she says. “I’ve always said that the film industry is like tourism on steroids. I’ve never seen anything else quite like it, and I’ve been in the industry for more than 20 years.”

But how do the stars and their supporters like the local spices?

“It’s always a kick to get them to try out our green chile,” McAlerney says.

Albuquerque Studios’ Chief Operating Officer, Wayne Rauschenberger, says Studio Concierge is unique because concierge services usually aren’t

headquartered in the studios themselves.

Studio Concierge’s office, however, is nestled neatly against a wall less than 50 feet from his desk.

“Every time I bring in a production, we listen to what they need,” he says. “Studio Concierge is one of the first groups of people I introduce them to. They are right here on our lot, and it really does make a big difference.”

Of course, the ability to expedite rattlesnakes and exotic dancers is also a big plus.

“It’s just amazing to think what they can pull out of a hat, from reservations to all the special needs for each production,” Rauschenberger says. “They’ve gone above and beyond the call of duty many times. And we’re always getting compliments on their service and what they bring to the table.”

Some experts even decide to stick around the city after their shows have wrapped—including McAlerney.

“I personally know a number of people who have moved to Albuquerque,” she says. “I love it. I just never thought in a million years I’d be living here, but after working a few movies, it just becomes so easy to love it.” —TOM SANDFORD