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## ELIZABETH THOMAS FEB/MARCH 2017

Feb 1, 2017 | Cover Story, Leading Ladies | ★★★★★



Occupation / Formal Title: Producer/Creative Director at Life Out Loud Films

Hometown: Warren, OH

(Lynchburg has been home for 3 years)

Tell us a little about your background. How did you get into film producing?

I studied Organizational Communications and Theatre at Xavier with dreams of acting. After graduating, I volunteered on a film in Cincinnati with Lynda Carter, and the leader in me started getting super involved. Since I



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didn't go to film school, my ideas were outside the box, but they were working.

The producers asked what it would take for me to quit my job and produce with them. I fell in love with producing and never looked back.

So far, what would you say is your greatest accomplishment?

Starting my company, Life Out Loud Films (LOLF), to make our first film Lake Effects. After seven years in Hollywood, I took a risk, left everything and moved to Virginia to raise money to produce films that inspire me. LOLF believes "Don't just make a film, make a difference" and focuses on inspirational stories while championing woman in film. Now, every day, I follow my passion with purpose and love what I do.

Now let's talk about Shoeless Wonders. Filming in Lynchburg will begin this year. How did you hear about the story of the football team and why did you choose to pursue it?

Three years ago, after hearing about our films in Southwest Virginia, HumanKind called to share the Presbyterian Home's history. Immediately my heart felt this story needed to be told, and it should be made in partnership with the community. It is exactly the kind of film LOLF is committed to making: Inspiring films a family can watch together.

Not only will Shoeless Wonders capture our local history and these orphans' remarkable journey, but it has universal underdog themes that should inspire youth worldwide.

Once it's completed, what message do you hope the movie sends?

Success is not determined by our circumstances. We also hope it will inspire audiences to look closer at adoption, foster care/family services and highlight the positive life skills learned through team sports.

You also are a motivational speaker on the side. What types of things do you speak about...and why?

I spent 10 years speaking to over 150,000 students about making choices today to set them up for future success,

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along with “turning your passion into your career.” Unfortunately, many youth don’t have someone they look up to telling them they are capable and can be successful. Also, many don’t realize you can make a living doing what inspires you. I was constantly inspired by these students, and this aspect of my life, inspiration and giving back, shaped the spirit of LOLF.

In your journey as a producer, what types of challenges have you faced and how did you overcome them?  
I started my company and started raising money during the economic downturn of 2008/2009 in a town where I knew no one. It was also the first film I was developing from concept so I had no track record, only promises. I believe your faith has to be stronger than the challenge and believed failure was not an option. I surrounded myself with smart mentors and partners, admitted what I didn’t know and stood firm on the goal, but remained flexible on the route.

Do you think women in your field face any unique challenges? Explain.  
The challenge becomes the impact gender inequality in film has on our society and the responsibility filmmakers have to change that. Only eight percent of directors, 11 percent of writers and 19 percent of producers are women. The concern—we are missing an essential female perspective in storytelling and since young girls grow up believing “they can be it, if they can see it,” it is important we remain mindful of portraying woman in all roles and careers. This is influenced by woman filmmakers.

What’s the best piece of advice that you’ve ever received?  
My grandmother taught me to always have faith. One mentor instilled that success comes with Passion, Preparation and Perseverance and another mentor/friend reminds me, “Life is not a dress rehearsal.”

What’s next for you in your journey after Shoeless Wonders? Any big goals?  
I hope some sleep and maybe a vacation! We have several other films in development, and my focus will be on collaboration with other creatives to help them bring their stories to the screen. This includes developing scripts

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specifically for certain networks, continuing to champion woman in film and showcasing Virginia through film.

Aside from work, how do you unwind and relax?  
Mindfulness and working out are two morning routines that help me keep balanced. The beach and nature ground me, and I enjoy food, wine, travel and the arts.

Closing thoughts?  
Life is short so find your purpose and live life out loud.



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Editor's Letter Feb/March 2017

## WHAT IS LB?

Lynchburg Business magazine is mailed directly to all businesses within Region 2000.

PUBLISHER:

## 2017 CoVa Magazine Readers' Survey

We're planning for 2017, and we'd like to know what you thought of our 2016 stories and coverage, and where we need to improve, too.

