



See a movie, help a family

By Hiroko Sato, hsato@lowellsun.com

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GROTON -- Scott Stathis and five other founders of the Groton Film Society rented a hall that seats 95 people last month, thinking it might be too spacious for the group's humble inaugural movie premiere.

Instead, the screening of *The World's Fastest Indian*, a 2005 movie starring Anthony Hopkins, drew 91 residents interested in quality, artsy films.

The group already has a 500-seat performing center at Lawrence Academy booked for its next screening.

Only this time, the Groton Film Society is hoping to use the momentum from the inaugural event for a good cause.

It is dedicating its second screening on Friday, Jan. 5, as a fundraiser for David and Valerie Fitzgerald, the young couple who lost their 44 Willowdale Road home in a natural-gas explosion on Dec. 11.

A KeySpan contractor accidentally punctured a service line leading to the house, according to KeySpan's parent company, National Grid. A supervisor called 911 but the house exploded before emergency crews could get there. The blast turned the home into piles of rubble.

Though no one was hurt, David Fitzgerald, an electrician who volunteers as a firefighter in town,

and his wife, Valerie, lost all their belongings. They have been staying with Valerie's parents in Hudson, Mass., according to Groton Fire Chief Joseph Bosselait.

Support began pouring in for the couple within an hour after the accident, and the town soon announced that the Fitzgerald Fire Fund had been set up.

Like many others who watched TV coverage of the explosion, Groton Film Society members couldn't believe their eyes.

"It's just an empty lot," Stathis said of the house the Fitzgeralds called home for the past three years.

In recognition of David Fitzgerald's contributions to the town, the film society decided to screen *Frequency*, Gregory Hoblit's film about a fallen firefighter and his son. The 2000 movie, which was nominated for a Golden Globe, features James Caviezel as the son who uses a ham radio left by the father, played by Dennis Quaid, to communicate with him 30 years after his death.

Membership to the Groton Film Society costs \$100 a year, with discounts available to seniors and students. Individuals also may drop in for a screening as a guest for \$12. But, on Jan. 5, the society will admit anyone to the event for free while encouraging all participants to make donations to the Fitzgerald family. Because the event is billed as a fundraiser, not a regular monthly screening, the society will also extend existing memberships by one month.

Stathis, the society's chairman, isn't sure how many people will attend the fundraiser, but he is optimistic that donations will add up to a meaningful amount. The group has invited the

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Fitzgerald family to appear onstage during the event so residents can put a face to the story, he said.

Both Bosselait and interim Town Administrative Officer Jeff Ritter -- a contact person for the Fitzgerald Fire Fund -- did not know yesterday how much money had been contributed to the fund so far, but Bosselait said the couple is trying to find a temporary housing in Groton.

The screening begins at 7 p.m. at Lawrence Academy's Performing Arts Center. Doors open at 6:30. Donations can be also made to the Fitzgerald Fire Fund, c/o Bank of America, 167 Main St., Groton, MA 01450.

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