Granville native raises funds for Thanksgiving horror spoof

NEWARK -- Jordan Downey and Kevin Stewart have good reason to be thankful.

Five months ago, the two filmmakers set out to raise $100,000 to create a sequel to "ThanksKilling," a horror film they made in 2007 about an evil turkey who slaughters a group of college students who are home on Thanksgiving break.

Using the website kick starter.com, Downey and Stewart used every strategy they could think of to get the donations they needed.

By the beginning of August, they had surpassed their goal, raising $102,000.

"It's really exciting," Downey said. "Now we want to keep the momentum going.

The first "ThanksKilling" movie was created by Downey, a Granville native, and Stewart when they were film production students at Loyola Marymount University.

A graduate of Heath High School, Downey brought his friends to Licking County to film t he movie in Heath, Newark and Granville.

Completed on a $3,500 budget, the film was meant to be a spoof of their favorite cheesy horror films.

But when the film was finished, it developed a cult following and was picked up by video-on-demand distributor Gravitas Ventures -- which made the movie available on Netflix, iTunes and PlayStation 3 -- as well as Time Warner, Comcast and Hulu, Downey said.

In January, Downey and Stewart decided to create a second "ThanksKilling" movie -- affectionately known as "the beakquel."

The two filmmakers decided their sequel would have a higher budget and more a dvanced special affects. But to do that, they needed to raise money.

To get people to donate through kickstarter.com, the filmmakers made buttons, stickers and T-shirts and mailed them to fans across the country.

They also started a playful Lost Turkey Campaign in which the film's star, the evil turkey puppet, threatened to abandon the

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project unless the money was raised.

"It took on a life of its own," Downey said. "We kept getting donations."

After 90 days, Downey and Stewart were thrilled to realize their beakquel had the money to become reality.

"We kept the attitude that this would happen, no matter what," he said. "People responded to that."

Now Downey and Stewart are working on the script for their sequel and working on special effects.

The evil turkey puppet is getting a complete makeover and will transform from a simple hand puppet into an animatronic bird controlled via a joystick, Downey said.

The filmmakers are planning to shoot the beakquel in December and January in Los Angeles, where they have access to actors and equipment.

"We are really excited to be able to do this and get to work with our friends on this," he said.

Their goal is to release the film by Thanksgiving 2012, Downey said.

With their funding in place, Downey and Stewart are ready to create a quality film with the same humorous spirit as their original creation.

"It's going to feel and run like an actual

film, not a (do-it-yourself) project," he said. "To get that experience at such a young age is great."

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