

## VIA goes entrepreneurial

By Elizabeth Zygmunt

The crew at VIA Studios Global is thinking. Gathered around a small set — a table upon which sits a delectable-looking turkey sandwich and a bowl of green apples — the art directors and camera team can't decide which shot best shows this culinary delight to its greatest advantage. The apples are moved about, the sandwich plate is turned by degrees, the camera zooms in and pulls back.

In this case, the meticulous attention to detail was being provided to Weis Markets for "webisodes" teaching shoppers how to prepare nutritious meals. However, VIA Studios Global, the "entrepreneurial" arm of WVIA, has shot webisodes for everyone from international companies, like Kraft Foods and to local firms, like Benco Dental.

VIA (pronounced 'vee-ah, not V-I-A') Global is "a little gem," according to producer, Robert May of SenArt Films. The New York City firm has produced such quality films as Errol Morris' Oscar-winning film, "The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara" and the critically acclaimed, "Stevie." Mr. May said he is delighted to receive New York City quality at northeastern Pennsylvania prices from VIA.

To VIA's executive producer, Tom Curra, this is the crux of the studio's value proposition. He said VIA will give the same "high level look" it gives to Mr. May's projects to any NEPA business that wants to create videos or "webisodes" to promote itself, enhance its Internet presence or communicate with employees and customers.

Costs for VIA's services are anything but Manhattan-like. VIA does not charge by the time it takes to produce the finished product. Rather, its prices are based on the length of the finished content. Pricing begins here, not with an hourly rate.

A case in point is Weis Markets. The supermarket chain features video on its Web site, starring one of its registered dietitians, Karen Buch. On the day the "turkey, cheddar and tart apple sandwich" was filmed, VIA's production crew, consisting of Mr. Curra; Ben Payavis II, production manager/director; Chris Fry, lighting director; Neil Prisco, technical director/editor; and Chris Zellers, edi-



On the set of Weis Markets' 'Healthy Bites.'

tor, was first unhappy with Ms. Buch's blouse. It contained tiny sequins that looked great under normal light, but garish in the harsh light of the set.

After she was sent to change, the crew turned its attention to the still shot of the sandwich. Everything in that shot was carefully analyzed. Weis brought a small truckload of props to the shoot — everything from china to mixing bowls to the food ingredients themselves. After the crew and the team from Weis selected which props to use, the recipes were actually cooked in the studio. Delicious scents wafted about as the team hunkered down around the sandwich.

Doug Cook, VIA's vice president of marketing and special events, said this painstaking attention to detail is something the studio provides to every customer. If you have a hair out of place, if your clothing looks rumpled or the light isn't flattering, the crew at VIA is going to notice and fix it. "Our attention to detail and client satisfaction come first," said Mr. Cook. "This really is priority No. 1."

Ms. Buch at last emerged, now clad in a soft green blouse that looked just fine under the lights. She took her place on the set — a small replica of a modern family kitchen. Several times she ran through her lines — there is no teleprompter — and the actions she was to perform, in this case, picking up half the sandwich and taking a bite. Then everyone was ready. The fastidious process yielded 2 minutes and 48 seconds of high quality video.

Mr. May, who had been visiting with Mr. Curra, nodded his approval. "It's state-of-the-art stuff," he said.

## A sampler of VIA Studios Global's portfolio

### A Bucknell Candlelight Christmas

VIA captured the sights and sounds of Bucknell University's internationally renowned undergraduate musical ensembles, the Rooke Chapel Choir and the Rooke Chapel Ringers. Adapted from the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols of King's College, Cambridge, the film was shot at the university's architectural gem, Rooke Chapel. This project utilized VIA's production, creative and post production services and was syndicated and seen on public television stations nationwide.



### The View from Here

Meredith National Media Group tapped VIA to produce a pilot of 'The View from Here,' an 'ultra hip' talk show featuring college-aged women (one is Leeza Gibbons' daughter, Lexi) and patterned after 'The View.' The pilot was filmed at VIA's Pittston studios and the finished product was delivered to Meredith in three weeks, from production date to digital delivery. Meredith is currently shopping the project to outlets such as VH1, MTV and Oxygen. VIA also created a 'sizzle reel,' a three-minute montage of the show to be used as a sales piece.



### Connie Talbot: Holiday Magic

The pint-sized runner-up in 'Britain's Got Talent' filmed her holiday special for national distribution to public television stations at VIA's studios in Pittston. The product was also delivered for DVD and CD distribution.



### Big Fork, Little Fork and Laugh Out Loud

Kraft webisodes were filmed by Meredith National Media Group in New York and Chicago and were sent to VIA for post production, which included editing, and creation and implementation of graphic elements and music. VIA also created a 'sizzle reel' for Apple's iPad. (Bottom, right.)



### Weis Markets' 'Healthy Bites' online videos

These videos (featuring dietitian, Karen Buch, right) for Web site and YouTube channel use VIA's production and creative services, as well as custom set design.