

'When Calls the Heart' Exec Producer Speaks Out on Power of 'Hearties'

"Trekkies on steroids."

That's what Brian Bird, executive producer of the Hallmark Channel's No. 1 series *When Calls the Heart*, calls the "Hearties," the show's half-million identifiable fans.

But, he tells host Dr. Steve Greene on the "Greenelines" podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network, there's a huge difference between *Star Trek* devotees and the show's loyal Hearties. Hearties, he says, are "not just putting on a foil hat and going to a conference somewhere ... they're living it. They're actually living it with each other in groups. ... Across the world, there are Hearties parties happening ... They care about one another, they pray for one another, they bring food to one another, they step up in times of need. They're very much like small-group ministry in churches."

Bird says this small-group effect is true whether or not the Hearties have a personal faith. Although Bird hopes to see the show endure, "like *Gunsmoke*, for 24 years ... It's an evergreen show that we see forever and ever. But at some point, 'When Calls the Heart' will end. I don't think that's anywhere, anytime soon. ... But when it does, what will go on are all these friendships that are being made with the show as a catalyst. And that is the best legacy of what we're trying to do."

The show had to make an abrupt plot shift after Lori Loughlin's exit from the show in season 6 after she and her husband, fashion designer Mossimo Giannulli, were indicted in this spring's college admissions scandal. Is there a possibility Loughlin could return if cleared of the charges?

Listen as Bird shares about this and more in this insightful podcast!