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Lourdine Florek
 owner/publisher
Just the Facts ©
 Thursday, June 24, 1999
 Hoopeston's only locally-owned daily news publication
P.O. Box 441, Hoopeston, IL. 60942
 Phone/Fax: (217) 283-9348
 Email: publisher@justthefacts.tm
www.justthefacts.tm

Hollywood legend to play Rossville woman in TV movie

ROSSVILLE—A Hollywood legend is going from playing the unsinkable Molly Brown to playing a Rossville woman.

Debby Reynolds will play Shirley Allison in an upcoming television movie, tentatively titled "A Gift of Love: the Daniel Huffman Story."

The movie is based on the now 20-year-old Huffman, who donated a kidney to Allison, his grandmother.

To prepare for the role, Reynolds visited Allison in Rossville about a month ago, said Allison's grandson, Daniel Huffman. Reynolds arrived in Rossville earlier than scheduled and spent time at The Feedbag Restaurant prior to visiting with the family, Huffman said.

A relatively unknown actor, Eldon Henson, will play Huffman. Henson has had several small roles, including one in "The Mighty," starring Sharon Stone, which is soon to be released on video. The story behind the movie began in 1996 when Allison, who has diabetes, required dialysis for kidney failure. "That whole year, she was on dialysis," Huffman said. "She weighed less than 100 lbs. She was nothing but skin and bones. She was just slipping away from us."

Huffman, a Rossville-Alvin High School junior and football player, began taking Allison for treatments and, in the process, reading about organ transplants. After a couple months, Huffman had convinced his grandmother to allow him to donate one of his kidneys, which was successfully done in 1996.

Huffman gave up more than his kidney. Because of the transplant, the youngster could no longer participate in full contact sports and had to give up his slot on the football team. Huffman, however, doesn't mind the sacrifice and said his abilities have been exaggerated. "I was never a college-bound football player," he said. "They try to make it sound like I was heading for the NFL," he said, adding he might have played for a small college or junior college.

News of Huffman's gift to his grandmother first received local media coverage, which soon spread to the IHSA Sports Report. From there, Sports Illustrated picked up the story. "Once they got ahold of it, the TV shows started calling," Huffman said. "It's been wild."

Huffman has been surprised by the media coverage. "People said, when Sports Illustrated did the story, that it would snowball. I'm thinking 'snowball into what? We've got Sports Illustrated here. It doesn't get any bigger than that.'"

He was wrong. When the Sports Illustrated story appeared, "three or four different people wanted to do a TV movie," Huffman said. The family hired an attorney to guide them through the process, and finally chose Hallmark to tell the story for Showtime. An air date has not been set.

See MOVIE on other side


Movie continued from other side

Working with television people has been interest-

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- Town & Country Restaurant

Wellington

- Coffee Corner

Briefly

Trees available

Rossville village officials are making a list of residents who wish to have trees planted on village property near their homes. Anyone not on the current list must stop in or call the village office, 748-6914, by June 30.

Tree selections include ornamental red bud, flowering white or piink crab, Bradford pear and red maple.

ing, said Huffman, who is a creative consultant on the film. ~~"They've all been really great. (That) sur~~prises me because from what you hear, you don't always get to work with the good guys."

Filming is currently underway in Toronto, Canada. Canada was selected to keep costs down. However, Huffman said, producers found a location that "looks a lot like Rossville," he said.

Huffman will get to find out if that's true when he goes to Canada on July 5 to spend two days watching production.

Having a movie based on his actions – and being a creative consultant – did not make Huffman immediately wealthy. "I got enough to get a used car to drive to school and around and a little left over for graduate school," said Huffman, a student at Florida State University.

Huffman plans to major in English education and minor in communications. He hopes to become a college professor when he graduates. And while he cannot play football while attending college, he supports the Seminoles and said head coach Bobby Bowden will have a cameo role in the movie.

The excitement surrounding the transplant has been an adventure for Huffman and his family, but the young man hasn't lost sight of what is important.

First, the opportunities that have arisen from his gift allow Huffman to stress the importance of organ donation. "It's another opportunity to get the message up there...about how many people are waiting on lists," he said. "People out to at least consider signing a donor card."

More important than organ donations, however, is the primary reason Huffman started this journey.

Summer reading club

"Ancient Civilization" is the topic for this week's summer reading club at the Hoopeston Public Library.

First and second graders will meet at 2 p.m. Thursday and may come dressed as a mummy, Egyptian or dress backwards for Oops Day.

Other activities will include sharing about good books, a jester joke contest, film, and playing

"The whole reason was to make my grandma healthy and we got that," he said. "Even if none of the other stuff happened, it wouldn't matter because my grandma's healthy."

Police News



Police are investigating a hit-and-run accident reported at 4 p.m. Tuesday in the Price Less parking lot, 317 S. Market. An unidentified vehicle hit a parked 1997 Chevrolet truck owned by Marilyn Smith of Hoopeston.

A boy's blue 26" Huffy 10 speed bicycle was found Wednesday in the 500 block of West Orange. The owner may identify and claim it at the police

In the Hospital



Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital
June 22

Admitted: none.

Discharged: Pearl Fletcher.

Weather



Partly sunny today. High 85. Tonight, partly cloudy. Low 65. Tomorrow, mostly sunny. High 87, low 68.

For the current weather conditions, call the **Hoopeston Weather Line** at (217) 283-6221.

Mummy Wrap. Children will also have refreshments.

Children ages one through kindergarten will meet at 10:30 a.m. Friday, for a story, film and refreshments. Peter Rabbit will be a special guest.

Children are encouraged to bring their favorite rabbit or stuffed animal.

Memorial collection

A street corner collection will be held July 2-3 for donations toward the Grant Township Veterans Memorial. Donations are also being accepted by mail to Veterans Memorial Fund, c/o Palmer Bank, P.O. Box 9, Hoopeston, IL 60942 or may be dropped off at Palmer or Community Bank.

Classifieds

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CHILD CARE

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623 E. Maple, 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, June 26. Women's and girls clothes, winter coats, miscellaneous items, girls' bikes, mini blinds.

Multi Agency, 206 S. First Ave. Saturday, June 26. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. For more information call (217) 283-5544.

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