

CHEBOYGAN DAILY TRIBUNE

Governor sends message of gratitude for film effort

By **MARY BARKER**

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James Saoud

The film crew is at work on the upper deck of Shepler's Ferry, The Hope, after the sailboat with Maire Kents remains was intercepted by the ferry while floating in the Straits of Mackinac. The boat was brought aboard and its story shared with passengers.

LANSING

The life and memory of Maire Kent and the work of Visionalist Entertainment Productions, which is telling the story of an "outstanding Michigander" through a film documentary called "Maire's Journey," has caught the attention of Governor Rick Snyder, who has written a letter on behalf of the people of Michigan expressing his gratitude for getting her story and

awareness about cardiac sarcoma before the public.

"By capturing the sailboat voyage of her remains from Cross Beach to a harbor where her ashes will be spread in the ocean, you are paying special tribute to her life and memory. I am confident that individuals from across our state and nation will be touched by this unique and special film," Snyder stated in a letter written July 12, the day the sailboat was launched.

He continued, "It is my understanding that Maire was highly esteemed by all. She was, and continues to be, an inspiration to those who had the honor of knowing and working with her. Although Maire is gone, her legacy will never be forgotten and her story will be remembered for generations to come."

Kent's battle with cardiac sarcoma was waged at the University of Michigan's medical center. Her cardiologist, Dr. Monika Leja, and her oncologist, Dr. Rashmi Chugh, struggled for months with a wide range of treatments in an effort to shrink the tumor, according to a press release from Keith Famie, executive producer of Visionalist Entertainment Productions. Bert Thomas, IV, chief executive officer of the Sarcoma Foundation of America said more than 14,000 people are diagnosed with sarcoma and nearly 6,000 die from the rare cancer annually.

"Sharing Maire's story with the world serves not only as a powerful tribute to her, but shines a light on this often forgotten cancer, helping to raise awareness for the thousands of patients like Maire who are in their own fight against sarcoma," said Thomas.

Kent's dying wish was to raise awareness about sarcoma cancer through the journey of her ashes from Michigan to the ocean, which Famie is filming for a 90-minute PBS documentary that will air in 2015. The journey is a tribute to her favorite childhood book, "Paddle-to-the-Sea." The ashes, along with photos of others who lost their battle to sarcoma cancer, are now en route to their final destination.

Kent fought for about 10 months before losing her battle under the care of Hospice of Michigan on September 27, 2013. Those touched by the Maire's message included Brighton-area businessman, Tom Rau, who is the film's lead financial backer. Gilda's Club Metro Detroit is also supporting the film.

"Maire's story and her friendship with producer Keith Famie shine a bright and important light on the need for support when a cancer diagnosis turns your world upside-down," said Laura Varon Brown, Gilda's Club Metro Detroit executive director.

“We look forward to sharing Maire's Journey and helping to empower other young people like Maire. We are so appreciative to be a charity partner to ensure that others diagnosed like Maire never have to face cancer alone,” stated Varon Brown, in an news release.

The University of Michigan has established a cancer fund in Kent's name. For information about the Maire Kent Memorial Fund for Cardiac Sarcoma Tumor Research, or to make a donation, visit www.mairesjourney.com.

Read more:

<http://www.cheboygannews.com/article/20140716/News/140719430#ixzz37dTclnfx>