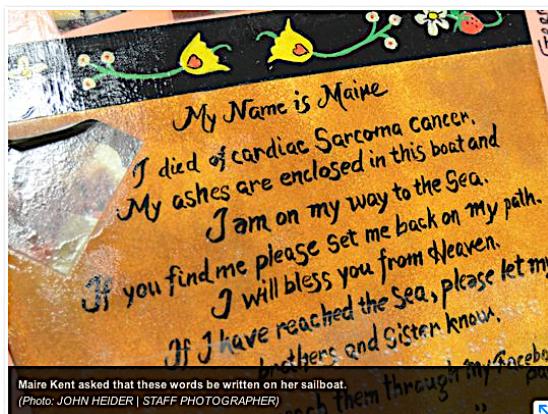


Filmmaker Famie nearing completion of “Marie’s Journey”



Local filmmaker Keith Famie's journey to capture the real life story of one young woman's battle with a terminal cancer diagnosis is nearing its ending, and he hopes the final results will positively impact many lives -- just like Maire Kent did.

Famie, whose filmmaking company Visionalist Entertainment Productions is based in Wixom, along with award-winning producer/director John Feist and their crew will complete production in the next few months on “Maire’s Journey” and debut it this spring.

The film captures the last months of a young woman's life, the journey she would go on afterward, and the impact it had on others. It's Famie's hope that anyone who sees the film gains a clear understanding of what a cancer patient goes through both physically as well as emotionally.

“I also hope that this will open the door for end-of-life discussions for families. We are all going to die someday,” he said. “Some of us will have the ability to plan our exit and what we would like to see happen afterwards in memory of our existence. For those of us who will leave our earthly world abruptly, I hope that we understand just how precious life is and everyday is a gift.”

Meeting Maire

Famie met 24-year-old Maire (pronounced Mary) Kent after she had been diagnosed with cardiac sarcoma. They quickly became friends. He realized as he spent more time with her that she was special and her desire to fight to live -- yet eventually facing the reality that she would lose the battle with this rare cancer -- was a unique story.

Famie said as her story unfolds, “we witness how Maire is forced to think about her end of life after a short nine months. She reflects on a book she learned to read from that would inspire her after-life journey to the ocean of her ashes in a small three-foot sail boat built by a blind carpenter.”

This journey, said Famie, would bring together everyday strangers who felt a deep desire to help Maire get to the sea.

“In the end, we learn that cancer is everyone's story at some point in our lives,” he said in reflection.

A dying wish

Maire's dying wish was to be cremated and have her ashes placed in a small, wood sailboat set in Lake Michigan in hopes of ultimately finding its way to the Atlantic Ocean. It did, getting help along the journey by people with their own stories.

"Maire's Journey was viewed by so many as impossible," said Famie. "I heard so often before we set out on this production this past summer that no one would help this vessel containing Maire's ashes get to the ocean. I am sure many who I told Maire's story to thought I lost it. I just believed that humanity is good and, if given the chance, they would be there for Maire."

He said so many things could have gone wrong during the weeks while Maire made her way some 1,400 miles to New York City, but they didn't.

"We experienced some very moving moments that brought our crew of six to say to ourselves more than once, 'Maire is guiding this journey.' So, quite possible when we are gone, just maybe we are not really ever gone," said Famie.

What's next?

They are now laying the film out and preparing for a two-month edit session. During this time Famie will film a few follow-up interviews with Maire's doctors, singer-songwriter Jill Jack, blind carpenter George Wurtzel and friends. These interviews will help them narrate Maire's long battle with cancer as well as the journey she took in her afterlife. These interviews will also allow for these people to reflect on Maire herself as a person.

It's their plan to host a large premiere in Michigan before taking it to NYC. The premiere will benefit Gilda's (Gilda Radner, former Saturday Night Live television show cast member and Detrioner) Club of Metro Detroit as well as the Maire Kent Memorial Fund for Sarcoma and Cardiac Tumor Research at the University of Michigan. Famie is hoping to attract through a formal invite one of the original cast members of Saturday Night Live, such as Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd or Jane Curtin who were close to Radner.

In addition to Gilda's Club, the film's other primary support has been through executive producers Tom Rau, who has been supporting this story from day one, and recently added to the team Anthony Schimizzi. Both are businessmen who have been successful.

"I am certain there will be so many lessons that will come from this wonderful spirited lady's story, more than can be written at this point in time," said Famie. "We are all very fortunate to have had Maire Kent in our lives. And come spring, we hope her story and the others who helped her along her way will touch possibly hundreds of thousands the same way."