

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Football players make move from field to screen

Markham Raiders signed as extras in Disney TV series being shot in the Toronto area

BY KATE GILDERDALE
CORRESPONDENT

Cindy Weedon has helped to put York Region in the picture.

The owner of Twins Talent Agency in Markham has been busy supplying local extras for *The Famous Jett Jackson*, a family series which premieres on the Disney Channel Oct. 25. Part of the filming took place recently on location at Meadowcrest School in Brooklin.

"The story is about a guy from L.A. who goes to a small town and tries to fit in by joining a football team," explained Weedon, who established her talent agency after her twin sons Christopher and Jeffrey, now six, landed a part in *Avonlea* several years ago.

Her eldest son, Craig, 10, also won an acting role in an upcoming show, recently.

When her phone started ringing off the hook, she realized that twins were a hot commodity in today's television and movie industry.

"I started my agency in 1996

and handled 300 requests from casting directors in the first year."

Although twins are her specialty, she is happy to take on any challenge. "They needed a football team for this series and asked if I could get one," recalled Weedon.

She contacted Markham Raiders' coach Gary Husband, who, along with more than 20 atom and peewee players, was delighted to accommodate her request to participate.

"I played the assistant coach to the star, but I didn't have a speaking role. I was just walking in the background and talking to players," said Husband.

And while it was an interesting experience, "I wouldn't want to do it full time — there was a lot of hanging around and waiting. There are a number of scenes where players are actually practising on the field and going through some scrimmages."

When the casting director was seeking extras to portray cheerleaders, Weedon called the Winstonette Gymnastic

Association in Markham.

They suggested four professional-level athletes who coach young students at the gym — Christine Murer, Alison Gardner, Crystal Tinarello and Dana Kinoshita — one of whom acted as a stunt double for a principal actor in the series.

The Famous Jett Jackson chronicles the adventures of a 13-year-old television star who abandons Hollywood to seek peace in the country.

"The series revolves around an African-American teenager and his family and as they live in rural North Carolina, we are presenting an ethnically diverse community," explained creator, writer and executive producer Fracaswell Hyman.

"We have been very pleased to see the wide range of experienced actors of all ethnicities here in Toronto. And the wide array of accomplished comedic actors is a huge asset for us in shooting a series for older kids, where humour is an important element of every script."



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Members of the Markham Raiders Football Club Atom and Peewees Division participated in a television shoot at Meadowcrest Public School in Brooklin, north of Whitby, recently. The Disney production called *The Famous Jett Jackson* concerns a high school football star. The television movie is being shot by Screenventures XLI Productions Ltd.

MUSIC MAKERS



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Above: The Sensation Jazz Band paraded up Unionville's Main Street on Saturday, kicking off the Markham Jazz Festival. Band members are, from left, Peter Sagermann, Al Cox, Ian Boyes, John Leitch, Bryan Day, and Juergon Hesse. Organizers estimate up to 5,000 people enjoyed live music throughout the day in Toogood Pond Park, and packed local bars and restaurants in the evening. Below: Jazz great Oliver Jones, centre, who headlined the Friday evening jazz festival gala at Markham Theatre, chats with concert producer Judi McIntyre, left, and artistic director Hal Hill.



ART APPRECIATION



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Rita Zerfas (left) and Liebgard Scharfenberg take a close look at some of the art up for auction at Canadian Imaging Associates on Riviera Drive in Markham earlier this month.