

Latrobe-based charity featured in Lifetime movie

By Michael Machosky, PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW Friday, January 28, 2011



'Taken from Me: The Tiffany Rubin Story' What: TV movie based on a case handled by the

American Association For Lost Children, Inc. (www.AAFLC.ORG)

When: 9 p.m. ET, Monday, January 31, 2011

Where: Lifetime Television

Details: www.mylifetime.com and www.AAFLC.ORG

Sometimes, you hear a story so remarkable that you think, "This ought to be a movie."

On rare occasions, this actually happens.

"Taken from Me: The Tiffany Rubin Story," which debuts Monday on the Lifetime channel, is based on a case handled by the American Association For Lost Children, a Latrobe-based charity that finds and rescues missing and abducted children. It stars Taraji P. Henson -- 2008 Best Supporting Actress nominee for "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" -- as Tiffany Rubin, the mother of the abducted child, and former "Lost" star Terry O'Quinn as Mark Miller, who runs AAFLC.

Miller, of Latrobe, has found more than 130 lost children since beginning AAFLC in 1987 -- all free of charge to the parents. It's a job that has taken him all over the United States and countries like Lebanon, Germany and Mexico -- where he once spent 16 hours in jail. When Rubin came to him, he had no idea that the search for her son, Kobe, would take them as far as South Korea to get him back.

TIFFANY'S STORY

Rubin, of New York City, had custody of her son Kobe, 7. But her ex-husband, Jeffrey Lee, did not return him after a court-authorized two-week visit in 2007. The only information she had to go on was that he had family in Pennsylvania, friends in New Jersey, a brother in Arizona. She thought he might be in Korea. Lee was born in North Korea, adopted in the United States, but intended to become a South Korean citizen. She also thought he had a Myspace account.

Abductors who leave the country know that the chances of authorities catching up to them are much slimmer, Miller says.

Miller's organization created a profile on Myspace of a beautiful girl who tried to befriend Lee. With Lee's pictures on Myspace were photos of him with his mother and Kobe in South Korea. The profile girl kept a conversation going with Lee -- then all of a sudden, he disappeared.

It seemed like a dead end. Then a mysterious e-mail arrived.

"He said, 'I believe your boy is at school here in Korea. I want to help, but I'd like to be anonymous,' " says Miller. "We didn't know if this was Jeff teasing her and playing games."



Latrobe-based charity featured in Lifetime movie, page 2

Friday, January 28, 2011

The anonymous e-mailer suggested Kobe was not eating well and being picked on at school.

"This gentleman ended up helping. It wasn't Jeff, or a setup," Miller says. "We needed to go to South Korea and meet with this guy and see the school where Kobe was. And then our job was -- with the mother -- to get Kobe out of school without them knowing or stirring up a fuss, and getting to the taxi to get us to the embassy."

As it turned out, that was only the beginning, as they then had to navigate a maze of embassy protocols, Korean law enforcement, a by-now-aware Lee, and airport security hassles.

CALLED TO ACTION

Miller, a Latrobe native and graduate of St. Vincent College, moved to Texas in 1982. He worked in the mobile-home business, then as a stockbroker and entrepreneur -- until a photocopied flyer of a child changed his life.

"I was at a grocery store and saw a 'Have You Seen Me?' ad," Miller says. "It caught my attention. I thought I had never seen any of those children. So I proceeded to call that organization. I thought they did hands-on investigations to find them. They just put up fliers, and people may call them if they see a child, and they'll relay it to the police.

"I thought, 'Somebody needs to look for these children.' I didn't really think it was me."

He did some research, and heard stories about parents exhausting their money with private investigators, to no avail. With no experience, Miller decided to start doing hands-on investigations himself. A Houston investigator mentored Miller as he began learning the detection trade.

He began to get some press attention -- including a feature in Life magazine -- for successfully resolved cases, which brought more inquiries for help.

After some health problems, Miller moved back to Latrobe.

"After a couple years of regrouping, I restarted the charity in 2005, " he says.

Parents aren't charged anything for a search, says Miller, who now has a small staff and some volunteers. But they only take certain missing children cases. They generally do not take cases involving runaways or stranger abductions, focusing most searches on custody cases.

The American Association For Lost Children is supported entirely by donations and a few small fundraising events. To find out more, visit its website at www.aaflc.org, or call 724-600-5744.



Latrobe-based charity featured in Lifetime movie, page 3

Friday, January 28, 2011

TO THE SMALL SCREEN

Emmy-nominated producer David Rosemont ("Into the West," "The Pillars of the Earth") was asked by Lifetime if he was interested in developing and producing Tiffany Rubin's story. He immediately saw its dramatic potential and thinks it has a fairly broad appeal.

"I'm a family man, so I completely saw the relatability of a story like this," Rosemont says. "Then I talked to Tiffany and Mark. I thought, 'What an extraordinary journey and adventure.' As a producer, you couldn't make that stuff up. The fact that she was able to reclaim her son when so many had not..."

There also will be a CBS-produced documentary, "Beyond the Headlines: The Tiffany Rubin Story," which will air on Lifetime Television after "Taken From Me," at 11:00 p.m. ET, Monday, January 31, 2011.

Read more: Latrobe-based charity featured in Lifetime movie - Pittsburgh Tribune-Review http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/ae/more/s_720331.html#ixzz1CNjKPjTR

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