

# Upcoming PBS Documentary Shines Light on Down Syndrome with Historic WWII Plane Pull

An upcoming documentary film by Keith Famie and his Visionalist Entertainment Productions team in Wixom will examine what life is like for individuals with Down syndrome and their families.

By **R.J. King** - October 13, 2020

f Facebook

Twitter

Pinterest

An upcoming documentary film by Keith Famie and his Visionalist Entertainment Productions team in Wixom will examine what life is like for individuals with Down syndrome and their families.

The film will feature Michigan residents of all ages and stages of life with Down syndrome, as well as community organizations that aid their families.

The goal is to premiere the film on Detroit PBS by the end of the year before it shows on other public stations around the state. The documentary also will likely be shared nationally through PBS online and via public television.



*"Chromosomally Enhanced: What's Your Superpower?", a film by Keith Famie and Visionalist Entertainment Productions, focuses on life for individuals with Down syndrome and their families. The film culminates with the individuals helping to pull a B-17 Yankee Lady Bomber plane at the Willow Run Airport. The pull took place on Saturday, Oct. 10. // Photograph by Kenny Ingle*

The premise behind the documentary, "Chromosomally Enhanced: What's Your Superpower?", which Famie came to realize after spending time with children and young adults with Down syndrome, is the conclusion that their superpower is that extra chromosome, which gives them the ability to see the world through rose-colored glasses.

A special scene for the documentary was filmed last Saturday at the Willow Run Airport/Yankee Air Museum in Ypsilanti Township. For the production, nine individuals with Down syndrome came together as a team to pull

the B-17 Yankee Lady Bomber (thousands of Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses were built for use during World War II) as part of the closing scene to the PBS film that has been in production now for almost a year.

Famie says when he first visualized the scene it seemed virtually impossible and unlikely that it would happen: How could nine enthusiastic, soft-spoken superheroes pull a 33,000-pound plane?

As the participants reached down to pull the rope, however, and unbeknownst to them, a team of first responders arrived to assist them — Wayne County Sheriff Deputies, White Lake Township Police Department, Novi Police Department, Ypsilanti Township Fire Department, Livingston County K-9 Unit, and the Willow Run Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting team, as well as two Detroit Lions icons Eric Hipple and Lomas Brown.

The two former football stars led the first responder brigade on a tank donated for the day by retired Brigadier General John G. Kulhavi. The kids looked up to the sounds of sirens blaring, seeing a parade of flashing lights and tank with an enormous Michigan Special Olympics flag waving in the wind. The entire production was a closed set created around safe COVID guidelines.

Since early summer, production for the film has been in full swing. Famie and his team filmed with several young people with Down syndrome and their families showing a world that so many people are not aware of.

“People with Down syndrome all have a sincere, caring, empathetic way in how they see the rest of humanity spreading joy and smiles to all they meet, something the world could use a big dose of right now,” says Famie. The plane pull also enables the documentary to shed light on the Michigan Special Olympics division of the Law Enforcement Torch Run. Both Hipple and Brown conversed with the group, shared laughs with the kids and families, and offered their thoughts on the importance of the Special Olympics.

The day concluded with a dance off with all first responders, family members in attendance, and the young adults dancing to Aretha Franklin’s song, “Respect.”

The purpose of the film is to give a voice to those individuals that may not always get a fair chance in life while also encouraging empathy from a society that might not fully understand what it is like to live and thrive with Down syndrome.

The production team included Executive Producers John and Carole Kulhavi, along with such community leaders as Anthony and Mary Schimizzi, Tom and Sue Rau, Anthony and Kristy Schena, Katherine A. Siarto, Keith and Kathy Langham, Charlie and Maria Damas, Rick and Kelly Browning, Mark and Katherine Tuttle, Marie Molnar, and Ted, Maria, and Kevin Welgosh.

Other supporters included the Marvin and Betty Danto Family Foundation, the Down Syndrome Guild of Southeast Michigan, the Special Olympics Michigan, Kids on the Go, the Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan, Gigi’s Playhouse, Gilda’s Club Metro Detroit, Kroger, Hadley’s Towing, Knights of Columbus #5452, and Firehouse Subs of Plymouth.