

Acting a 'blast' for former Mount Prospect resident



Actor Patrick Rafferty grew up in Mount Prospect and graduated from Wheeling High School before embarking on a show biz career through Second City.



Dan Gire

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Patrick Rafferty grew up in Mount Prospect dreaming of one day owning a restaurant.

Two things changed his mind: 9/11 and a news story in the Daily Herald.

"The Herald story reported that businesses were suffering after 9/11, but that comedy was booming," Rafferty said. "People wanted to laugh."

The story ran a listing of places where people could learn to make people laugh. One was Second City's improv classes at its Arlington Heights satellite school. Rafferty signed up.

"I had a blast there!" he said. "And that was my segue into professional performing."

If you caught the Sept. 23 season premiere of ABC's "black-ish," you saw Rafferty playing the supporting character of Mr. Travis. Earlier this year, you could see Rafferty as Earl the unscrupulous car salesman in the CBS TV series "Scorpion."

But the part he's proudest of is playing Nick Offerman's letter carrier, Paul, in NBC's now-defunct "Parks and Recreation."

"Oh, I love that show!" he said. "One of my goals was to be on 'Parks and Recreation.'"

He had auditioned for the show several times before finally landing the part.

"Nick is from Chicago, so we had lots of talks about the city and being from Chicago," Rafferty said. "It was wonderful!"

Rafferty was born in Chicago, the second of six kids to Allstate Insurance employee Philip Rafferty and his wife Donita.

At 4, Rafferty moved with his family to Mount Prospect, where his parents still live. ("I come back home to see them whenever I can," the actor said.)

A movie shot in the Northwest suburbs sparked Rafferty's interest in show business, even though he didn't know it at the time. In 1985, the Wheeling High School student became an extra on the set of Chicago filmmaker David Seltzer's teen movie "Lucas," partially shot at the then-Arlington High School on Euclid Road.

"Again, it was an article in the Daily Herald that alerted me about the casting call for the movie," Rafferty said.

"I got to be in a scene sitting down from Corey Haim. In a hallway scene, I crossed in front of Kerri Green, the red-haired actress. I had a blast. An absolute blast."

Still, Rafferty's life dream of a culinary arts career guided him to earn a degree in restaurant management at downstate University of Illinois where he graduated in 1991.

He moved to Arlington Heights for several years, working in restaurant-related jobs and performing in community theater productions.

Once 9/11 derailed his restaurant plans and Rafferty took those Second City classes, he booked a commercial agent in Chicago. He made a few commercials, plus played "Cop No. 1" in a low-budget independent horror feature "The Rockville Slayer," about a serial killer who targets grade schoolers.

"I had always loved movies and television," Rafferty said, "but I never pursued it. While at Second City, I decided this is what I want to do. I decided to give myself a shot."

So, Rafferty moved to Los Angeles to be a part of the Second City's advanced conservatory program. He secured an agent and a manager.

Since then, Rafferty has appeared in several TV series, including "Trophy Wife," "Sam and Cat," "Community," "Suburgatory," "The League," "House, M.D." and others. His commercial work includes playing a panicked air traveler with Jason Bateman for MGB.

"I'm a pretty goal-oriented person," Rafferty said. "Now I'm in a wonderful place. I am having the greatest time of my life."

-- Dann Gire

- Dann Gire and Jamie Sotonoff are looking for interesting suburbanites now working in showbiz. If you know of someone who'd make a good feature, email them at dgire@dailyherald.com and jsotonoff@dailyherald.com.