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- > Home
- > News
- > Business
- > Coupons
- > Sports
- > W Life
- > Events Calendar
- > Entertainment
- > Faith
- > Education
- > Honoring a hero --
Sp. Jason Edens
- > Home & Garden
- > Real Estate
- > John Maher
Award
- > Williamson
Images
- > Opinions
- > Obituaries
- > Special Sections
- > Williamson's Best
- > Business Video
Directory
- > Classifieds
- > Local Restaurants
- > Advertise
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- > Links
- > Enews
- > Rack Locations
- > January 2010
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Gabe Sipos is 'Country Strong'

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Gabe Sipos walks the red carpet in Hollywood at the premiere of "Country Strong." The Spring Hill boy has a speaking part in the movie, which stars Gwyneth Paltrow and Tim McGraw.

When your life starts out in front of the camera as the 2002 Nashville New Year's baby, a Hollywood red carpet appearance is only natural.

On the heels of his first movie appearance, 8-year-old Gabe Sipos shakes off a walk down the red carpet in Hollywood as just something "very cool" that happened in his lifetime. The red carpet event, held during the second week of December, was to mark the limited release of the movie "Country Strong" starring Gwyneth Paltrow and Tim McGraw and featuring Gabe as "Travis." The limited release in Los Angeles, Nashville and Franklin, Tenn., precedes the national release of the movie on Jan. 7, 2011.

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According to the young Spring Hill resident, he said participating in the movie was, in a word, “exciting.” He plays a Make-A-Wish child who is stricken with cancer – not so much of a stretch from the real world. Gabe was diagnosed with cancer just a few days shy of his first birthday, but today is six years cancer-free.

Gabe’s mom choked back a few emotions as she watched her son play the role he knew so very intimately in real life. “It was so hard to see him like that again,” she said.

Although he continues to have surgeries as his body grows, Gabe is now a healthy kid, who goes to public school every day and enjoys building a Lego village to rival any model city in the country. He is a typical kid who just happens to have a speaking role in one of the latest movies to hit the big screen, currently sweeping the nation.

Parents Rob and Lu Sipos have done a great job of keeping their little man focused on a being a typical child. In fact, Rob and Lu had several conversations with Gabe prior to attending the movie premiere in Hollywood. The movie deals with adult themes. His mom said, “We talked about how grown up it was.” She told him there would be some swearing in the movie and that things sometimes get complicated for adults. Then she used her hands to cover her eyes, saying, “We did a few times during the movie.”

The movie’s storyline centers on the plight of Paltrow’s character, singer Kelly Cantor, who following an arrest for being drunk and disorderly, enters rehab and then launches a comeback tour. Entwined in the story is a romantic interlude between Cantor’s husband, played by McGraw, and Cantor’s close relationship with an up and coming singer songwriter played by Garrett Hedlund.

The single scene featuring Gabe and Paltrow took a long day of takes and retakes, according to the Allendale Elementary School third-grader, who is newly bitten by the acting bug. Following on his movie experience, Gabe said, “I would like to do a commercial.” And the one product, which comes to mind immediately – Legos.

Regarding his movie experience, Gabe is quick to praise Paltrow who made him feel very comfortable on his first movie set. “She gave me tips on acting, especially when we had to short cut a scene,” he said, speaking like a seasoned professional.

Lu added, “I was really pleased to see how Gwyneth interacted with all the children on the set. You could tell she is a mom and good with kids. She always made him feel really special – really loved. Gabe made a special friend when he met Gwyneth Paltrow. She is as sweet as she is beautiful.”

Gabe counts working with Paltrow and McGraw among his favorite parts of the movie. He is also quick to gush about a friend, who was a movie extra in the movie in the Make-A-Wish scene. Make-A-Wish played an integral role in Gabe’s appearance in the movie. Prior to casting the part, Screen Gems Studios, the production company for “Country Strong,” sought input from the Make-A-Wish organization, which provided the studio with photos of children who could portray the part of Travis. After a couple of auditions, Gabe was chosen for the part.

While walking the red carpet, one of the first people to interview Gabe was Ben Lyons, who is the E! News film correspondent and movie critic. He stopped Gabe and asked him the one question most stars get asked while trekking the carpet “Who are you wearing?” Gabe proudly responded, “Skinny jeans and Lego shoes from CoolSprings Galleria.” Then, as he did on the carpet, in the interview Gabe lifted his foot to

show the grey, black and red footwear that is so popular with the younger set.

He said another highlight that night included him showing his dance moves to Reba McEntire.

Gabe Sipos and his battle with cancer are the inspiration behind his the nonprofit organization named Gabe's My Heart, featuring Chemo Duck – a stuffed duck with a working chemo port. Visit www.chemoduck.org for information.

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