



PHOTO BY KATHY RYAN

Cuba Gooding Jr. left, star of "Gifted Hands," with producer Dan Angel on the set, which is actually the front lawn of a home on Windmill Pointe in Grosse Pointe Park.

Windmill Pointe stars

By Kathy Ryan
Staff Writer

Hollywood has returned to Grosse Pointe.

Two lakefront homes on Windmill Pointe Drive in Grosse Pointe Park, as well as the tree lined boulevard itself, are being used as backdrops for the made for TV movie, "Gifted Hands," currently being filmed in and around Detroit.

Starring Cuba Gooding, Jr. in the title role, the story is of world-renowned pediatric neurosurgeon Ben Carson, who grew up in Detroit and graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School. It will debut Feb. 7 on TNT.

Dan Angel, who won an Emmy for "Door to Door," starring William H. Macy, is executive producer, partnering with Sony Pictures for the project. Thomas Carter directs.

"I first saw Ben being interviewed on '20/20' about six years ago," Angel said. "I then read his book. I met with him and his family. When you hear his story, you're simply amazed at all he overcame, all that he has accomplished. It was a story that needed to be told."

Carson himself has been extensively involved with the project, according to Angel.

"Ben has seen every draft of every script and has input on every last detail," Angel said. "Either the director or I speak to him at least three times a day. I made him a promise that I would make it as accurate as possible."

Carson faced what many would deem insurmountable obstacles while growing up in Detroit. Born in 1951 to Sonja, who had only a third grade education, he and his brother were left on their own while she worked three jobs following his parents' divorce. Carson admitted he did not make very good choices and that school was a very low priority.

But his mother's decision to turn off the television set and require her sons to read and frequent the library became one of the defining moments of his life. A library in a home on Windmill Pointe provides the setting for this pivotal scene in the movie.

As Carson achieved in academics, graduating from Yale and U of M Medical School, he had other issues to overcome, including anger management. Carson credits God with turning that part of his life around, and his faith is a major part of his story and this film.

A residency at Johns Hopkins University Hospital was the beginning of his medical career. At 33, he appointed chief of pediatric neurosurgery. He has performed ground breaking surgery on conjoined twins and children with uncontrollable seizures. Now 57, he still performs hundreds of surgeries a year, both here and abroad.

The Meade Mansion on Windmill Pointe serves as the setting for Carson's home in suburban Baltimore where he now lives. Carson insisted on using a house that is similar to his own 14,000 square foot home. He wanted young people to see the kind of life they could enjoy through education and hard work.