

Community

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The truth is out there for Port Moody boy

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A Port Moody 12-year-old with cerebral palsy is giving David Duchovny a run for his money.

Marco Niccoli makes his worldwide debut tonight in the eagerly anticipated film *X-Files 2: I Want to Believe*.

The truth is out there, and Marco received it right before Christmas last year. The Banting Middle School student, then in Grade 7, was told he was cast in creator-director Chris Carter's upcoming *X-Files* film.

He had no acting experience, save for small parts in the odd school play.

Marco said when his family found out, they just said, "Ah! Ah!"

Last year Carter e-mailed the Easter Seals Camp (a getaway in Squamish for children with disabilities that Marco has attended for the past three years), specifically looking for a boy between six and 11 with cerebral palsy.

Marco's mother, Kory Benedet, received the e-mail from a school liaison who supports her with her son and thought, "Sure, why not?"

"I phoned them up and I said, 'Well, he is 12,' and they asked, 'Has his voice changed?' and I said, 'No,' so they said to bring him down," Benedet explained.

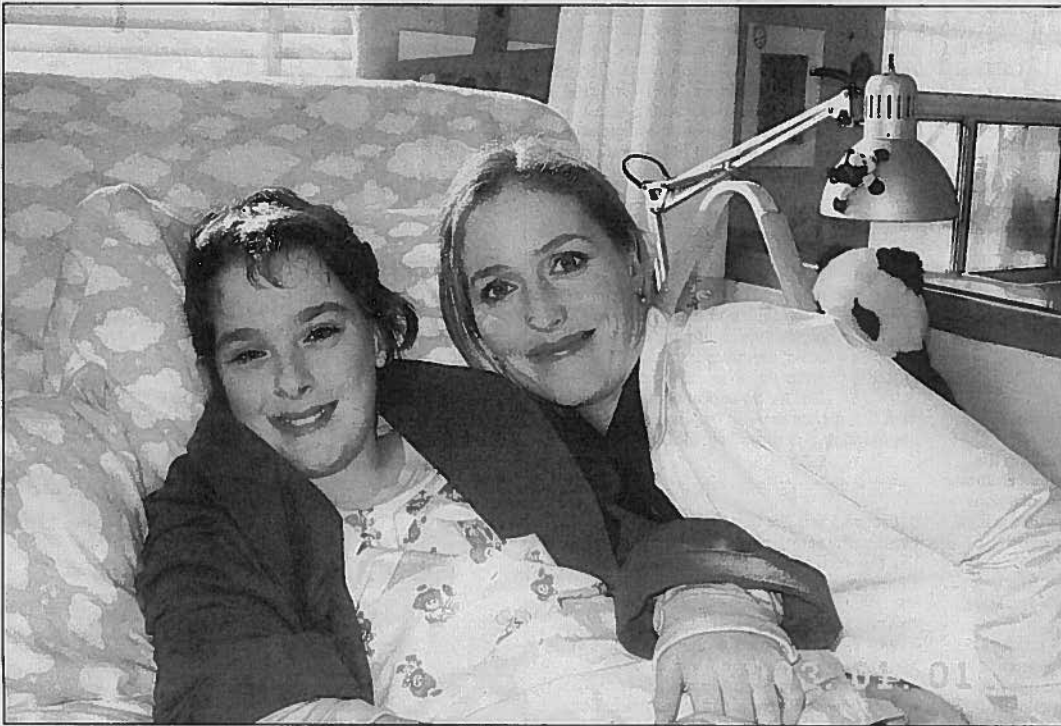
He was asked to the second callback, and finally selected from dozens of hopefuls with the same condition.

Marco plays a young boy named Christian Fearon, and shares the screen with big-name actors Gillian Anderson and Billy Connolly.

His scenes were shot in February at Riverview Hospital. Mother and son were there for five long days over a two-week period, holed up in the spooky sanatorium.

"They kept telling me to go up to the fourth floor. I said, 'There's no way I'm going up there!'" Benedet said.

To keep the mystery alive, the film's story line is still



Marco Niccoli, 12, poses with *X-Files* star Gillian Anderson, above, and gives his best serious look, below.

Photos submitted



under wraps. Marco and Benedet said they don't even know the full plot.

All that can be exposed is that it is a stand-alone story true to some of the show's

most acclaimed episodes. "A lot of the other lines were blacked out, and we had

to sign a contract not to reveal anything about the film," she said.

Adding to the film's enigmatic nature, Benedet said she doesn't know why Carter specifically wanted someone with cerebral palsy. She added that Marco's character doesn't have the condition in the film; he's just "terminally ill."

With cerebral palsy the symptoms can range from severe to mild. A lot of children with the condition can walk, but many others are non-verbal or unable to walk. With Marco, it just affects his walking ability.

"All they told me was that it had something to do with stem cell research," Benedet said.

"But with Chris Carter things are always related. Like Mulder, that's his mother's maiden name. And his production company, 1013

Productions, that's his birth date. So I am wondering why, but I'm sure gonna ask him."

Thanks to his big break, Marco now has his own agent. Benedet said she is determined to get her son in front of the camera again.

She noted that it's tough for young actors to get started because a lot of classes are for adults. And adding Marco's condition to the equation could make his success even harder to achieve.

"But you know, he's such a natural," Benedet said. "And on set they didn't even put makeup on him because Chris Carter said he's got skin like porcelain."

Marco even told his mom to be on the lookout for rogue fans.

"I said, 'When people see me they might go, 'Hey it's the kid from that movie!' I told her to be prepared for anything,'" he said.

Despite contact with a director, notable actors and out-of-this-world props, Marco said his favourite memory of the experience was the food tray.

He even had access to it from the comforts of his own trailer.

"It was just like my home but smaller," Marco said. "And they gave me a PlayStation Portable. It was the greatest moment I ever had in my life."

It's a movie-making tradition that on the last day of shooting an actor should give a speech. So on his last day, Marco got up and spoke to the crowd of film-production insiders. According to his mom, there wasn't a dry eye on the set.

"He thanked Chris Carter for making his dream a reality. He talked about how he enjoyed it and had so much fun, and then he goes, 'Peace out everybody!' It blew me away," she said with a hearty laugh. "He's a natural and obviously, Chris Carter saw that."