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# Millville girl lands sci-fi film role

## With scenes shot in her own hometown, 8-year-old actress learns all the angles

By KATE YORK

Press Enterprise Writer

MILLVILLE — For her first movie role, 8-year-old Hayley Reichner skipped the trip to Hollywood and the whole audition process, instead getting her close-up right in her own hometown.

New York City company Eighty-Watt Cinema filmed part of a sci-fi movie here recently, with Hayley given the only local role, playing the daughter of the movie's main character.

"I was a bit surprised and really excited," said Hayley, a second-grader at Millville Elementary School who, until this, had acted only in church plays. "My friends were surprised, but I think they believed me."

If not, they will in the spring, when the movie should be finished.

There will be a screening in Millville, said director and producer Josh Dilworth.

"We'll definitely give people the opportunity to see it," he said. "Whether it's renting out a theater or setting up a projection screen somewhere, it will be here."

'A natural'

By then, maybe Millville's youngest star will have had a chance to let the experience sink in.

"It's all been a blur," said her mother, Michelle. "They asked us last week if we would do it, and here we are. There was no tryout or anything."

Dilworth said he wanted a child actress who didn't have a lot of acting experience.

"I auditioned girls in New York over a period of months," he said. "I decided



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I really wanted an amateur. We wanted someone who would have that playfulness and innocence."

Dilworth's longtime friend Virginia Whittington suggested Hayley for the part and agreed to let him use her home along Rod and Gun Club Road here as one of the movie's sets.

"Hayley's a natural," said Nurit Monacelli, who plays Hayley's mother in the film. "Most of the time kids who are actors are so well-trained to be someone different than they actually are. Hayley's just a kid, and that's what's great."

### 'A lot of work'

Wearing her own jeans and long-sleeved shirt — the wardrobe had been decided on the night before — Hayley had three scenes and four lines, all filmed in one day.

Her mother said she battled through nerves the night before filming the scenes, which included eating breakfast and leaving for school, dancing outside and getting ready for bed.

But when Dilworth said "Action," Hayley was ready to go.

"We had a wonderful first take," Dilworth said. "It's great to get it that good the first time."

It was the number of times a single scene had to be rehearsed and then shot that surprised Hayley the most, she said.

"I didn't know about all the angles," she said. "It's a lot of work, but I had a good time."

And in the breakfast scene with Monacelli, there was one piece of advice from the director that Hayley had no problem accepting.

He suggested the girl roll her eyes as she delivered her line.

"You're a pro at that," laughed her mother. "That will come naturally."

### Details of a scene

Hayley also had a chance to see the tiny details that go into each scene. Each move by the actors was carefully planned.

"Pour coffee, but don't put in sugar, just cream, and then put the spoon down in the sink," directed Dilworth for one take.

A purse was placed in three different spots in the shot before being eliminated altogether.

Hayley had to remember to actually put the spoon all the way into her mouth when she pretended to eat cereal, although the bowl contained only milk.

"If there were cereal, the crunching would be way too loud with the microphone on," said Dilworth.

The new actress also learned that a big part of moviemaking is about waiting — for the lighting, for the sound and for the set to be just right.

Between takes, she and Monacelli talked about favorite foods and growing up with brothers.

But the biggest challenge might have been putting her coat on at the end of the scene, with Monacelli holding it upside down for her to slip her arms into and then flipping it over her head into place.

"My head kept getting stuck," Hayley said.

### Millville a natural

The six-person crew also filmed a scene driving in Millville, a seemingly unlikely location for a movie shoot but one that seemed natural to Dilworth.

"I'm used to working on much, much bigger productions, and for this I just wanted to do it small and have the focus be on the story," he said.

"Here, we can do that. It's relaxing and beautiful, and the focus isn't on getting a block of Fifth Avenue blocked off and getting permits."

The movie, while science fiction, is focused on relationships, Dilworth said.

"It's essentially a love story between the main character, who's a professor, and his wife," he said. "He's offered the ability to see how his life could have played out in different ways. It's a journey back to his family, who he's separated from."

It was shot in seven days in Millville, New York City and Philadelphia on a \$35,000 budget.

The scenes Hayley was in help establish the family relationship and everyday routines.

"The movie is about the contrast between routine and memory," said Dilworth. "It's things that feel familiar and then being thrown completely out of your element."

### Becoming a pro

Near the end of her day of filming, moviemaking itself was feeling pretty familiar to Hayley, who dreams of being on the Disney Channel.

She was being called a "pro," although one who hopped rather than walked back to her mark when it was time to start a scene again.

She even got to veto a suggestion her mom had of adding weight to her backpack for a scene by putting a doll in the back of it.

"Mom, who would go to school with a doll?" she said. And, yes, she rolled her eyes.

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