

KIDS MAKING NEWS

Soccer movie kicks off a dream

If you love soccer and inspiring sports stories, we've got a new movie to tell you about. And best of all, it stars a young Michigan actor and was made right here in metro Detroit!

"Golden Shoes," was created and produced by Norman Koza, of Sylvan Lake, and features his son, Christian, who also plays a character with the same name. Christian, a seventh-grader at Our Lady of Refuge School in West Bloomfield Township, plays a young soccer player with big dreams who faces even bigger obstacles.

A magical idea

One day, a few years ago, Norm and Christian were shopping for soccer shoes in Canton, and inspiration struck. "We were in Soccer World to pick up a pair of shoes and the whole story of 'Golden Shoes' flowed right through me. Basically the hair on my arms stood up," remembers Norm of that magical moment. There, surrounded by shoes, a flood of details began to take shape in his imagination. The story "was about a father who was (in the military and) MIA, the mom gets in a car wreck and the boy has to go live with a neighbor and is bullied by the neighbor...."

After Norm and Christian finished shopping he headed home to start writing the story. "And lo and behold, here we are about three years later and 'Golden Shoes' is coming out," marvels Norm, who had a career in banking and finance, not filmmaking.

After working on the story for a few weeks, Norm hired screenwriter Lance Kawas to help him turn the story into a screenplay and movie script. "We went through 17 drafts before we got it right," says Norm, but once they did, Lance directed the film.

So how do you go from a career in banking to making a movie, the Yak wondered? "I've just always had a passion for film ever since I was young and working in video stores. I worked at Hollywood Video and Mammoth Video when I was younger" and loved movies and wanted to get into the filmmaking world.

It's safe to say he's making that career transition. This is Norm's second movie project and he has several more ideas he'd like to turn into films including a sequel to "Golden Shoes."

Norm says casting Christian as the young

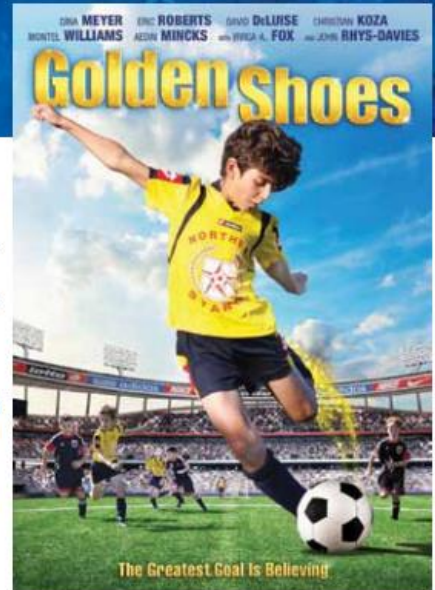
soccer player and star of the film was both easy and a bit unusual. At first he got a hard time from other people because they were telling him "you're the producer, this is your film, you can't put your son in the movie." But Norm didn't listen and is so happy with the great job Christian did in the film. He says casting Christian, who has never been camera shy, was his best decision on the project.

His son is modest and low-key about his acting career, but liked that decision, and liked working closely with his dad on this special movie. In fact, you could say making the movie was a family affair. Christian's little sister Lourdes also scored a small part! And Norm says his wife, Rula, played one of the biggest supporting roles by taking care of the family while he worked long days and nights on the movie and traveled to Los Angeles to work with film editors.

Christian says he's always been interested in acting and soccer. "I started playing soccer when I was three years old," reports Christian, who now plays on a travel soccer team. He also got an early start in acting, with a small role in his dad's first film project, "Exit 33," when he was just four. Does Christian plan to make acting his career? "Sure," he says, adding "why not?"

Movie debut

When we yakked with Christian and his dad for this story, it was just a few days before a special September 24 red carpet premier at Emagine in Novi. They were both super excited to share the finished movie with friends and family on the big screen. "Lots of people will be there. My friends are coming, my whole family is coming, my cousins, lots of people will be there," said Christian. After the local showing, the movie will go direct to DVD and be available to buy online or at retail locations including Target and Wal-Mart stores. The retail price is \$13.



The movie poster, above, from "Golden Shoes," features Michigan actor Christian Koza. The DVD hit stores on October 6 and is also available for purchase and downloading online. Learn more at www.goldenshoesmovie.com.



Photo courtesy of Norman Koza Productions

Actor Christian Koza, 12, of Sylvan Lake, was all smiles at the red carpet premiere of "Golden Shoes," at Emagine Novi last month.

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Norm says "Golden Shoes" was filmed in metro Detroit back in October of 2012, and then took almost three years for visual effects, editing and music to be added to the film. He is especially proud that the film is a celebration of Michigan talent with about 100 kids from across the state involved in the movie, including many local soccer teams. Plus, there are several popular actors including Aedin Mincks of Disney's "A.N.T. Farm," Eric Roberts, Vivica A. Fox and talk show host Montel Williams.

Norm hopes the movie will be enjoyed by families, but also thinks "Golden Shoes" would be a great film to show in schools because it is an inspirational story with the same kind of heart as movies like "Rudy" or "Bend It Like Beckham." Norm says he's already heard from a couple of schools and hopes he and Christian will get to visit and share their story.

"What I'm trying to do is send a message out there for kids to really believe in themselves. Confidence is everything," says Norm. "Everybody told me that I could never make this film. Everybody told me that I would never get a good actor in this film. And I've proved everybody wrong so far," says Norm about overcoming the many challenges involved in making the project. Norm says his goal wasn't to prove anyone wrong; it was simply to make the best movie he could. If the movie inspires one young person "in the whole world, that means everything," says Norm.

The Yak bets Norm will easily score that goal.

By Janis Campbell



Photos courtesy of Norman Koza Productions
Actor Aedin Mincks, whom you might recognize from Disney's "A.N.T. Farm," and Michigan actor Christian Koza play for the Northern Stars in the movie "Golden Shoes."



Christian Koza, above, plays a young boy who dreams of becoming a soccer star in "Golden Shoes."



FAST FACTS ON CHRISTIAN KOZA

Family life: Christian lives with his dad, Norm, and mom, Rula, and sister Lourdes, 10, and brother Kadin, 6, in Sylvan Lake. They don't have any pets yet but he says the whole family fell in love with a dog in the movie and they are now planning to get a dog soon.

Activities: Soccer is, of course, Christian's favorite sport, but he also enjoys playing basketball with his friends and hanging out with his brother and sister.

Coming Soon: Christian's dad is already working on the story for "Golden Shoes 2." He says you'll have an idea of where the sequel is going based on how the first movie ends and shares this teaser: In Part 2, Christian goes to play for the U.S. National Team.

Inset, Christian Koza, holds the movie slate on the set of "Golden Shoes," which was filmed in metro Detroit. About 100 kids from across the state were involved in the film.