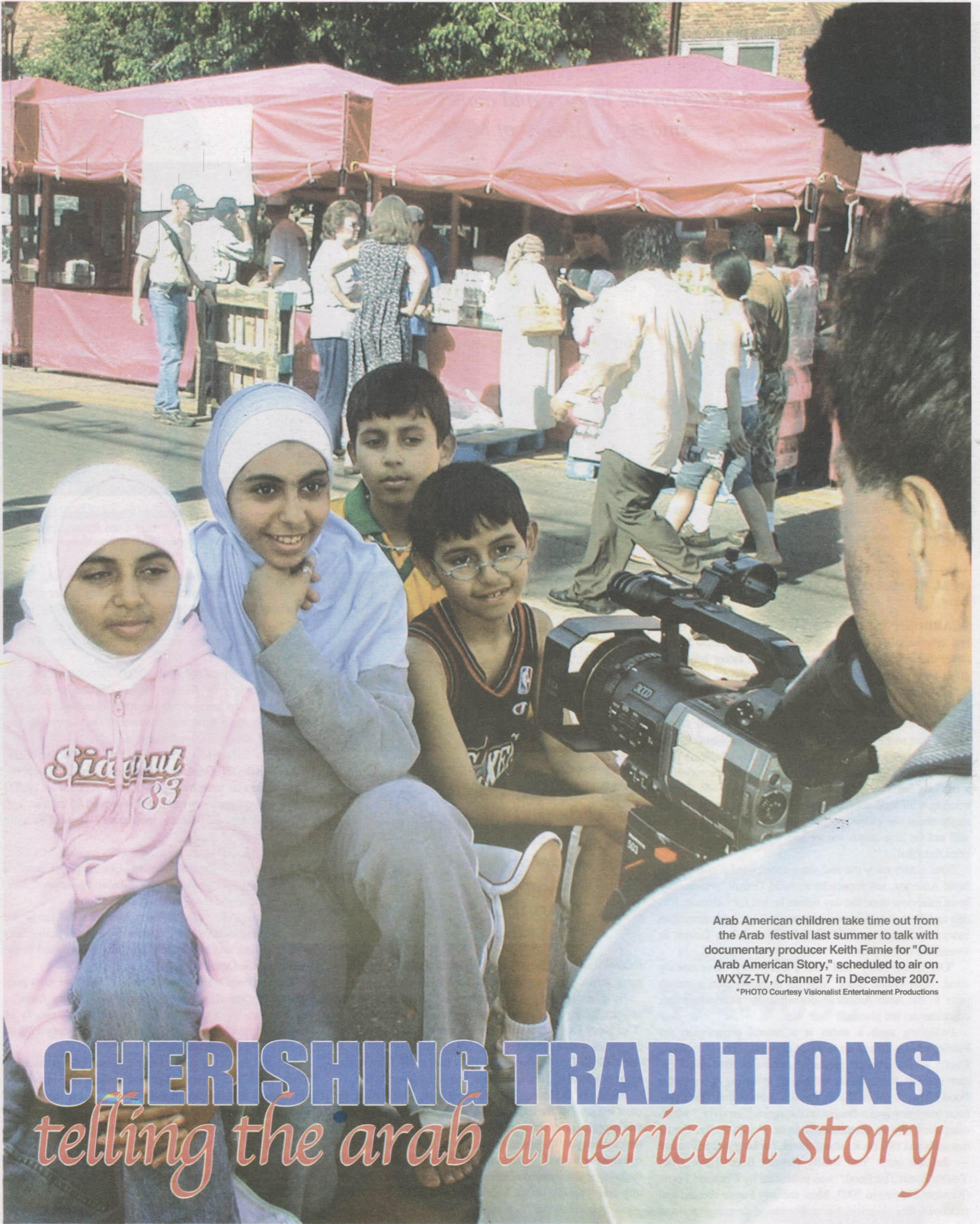
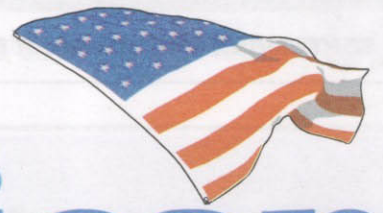


The Arab American News

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Arab American children take time out from the Arab festival last summer to talk with documentary producer Keith Famie for "Our Arab American Story," scheduled to air on WXYZ-TV, Channel 7 in December 2007.
"PHOTO Courtesy Visionalist Entertainment Productions"

CHERISHING TRADITIONS

telling the arab american story

SPECIAL FEATURE

CHERISHING TRADITIONS

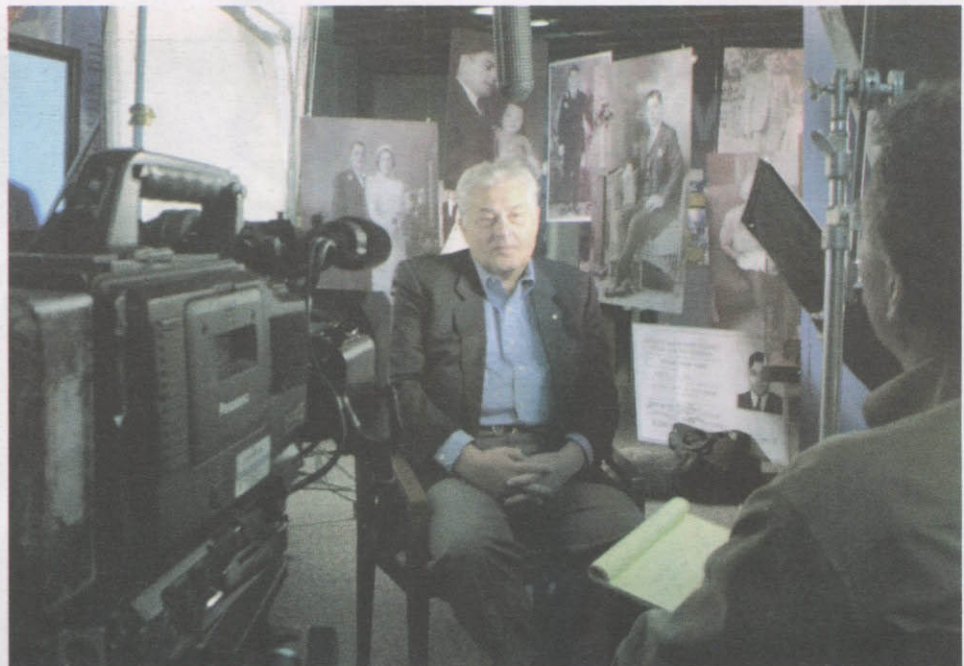
telling the arab american story

Documentary will focus on the history and contributions of the community to the growth and development of Metropolitan Detroit



Lebanese American Dr. Marwan Abouljoud explains a liver transplant during filming of "Our Arab American Story."

"PHOTO Courtesy Visionalist Entertainment Productions



Lebanese American Russell Ebeid during filming of "Our Arab American Story."

"PHOTO Courtesy Visionalist Entertainment Productions

By M. Kay Siblani
Editor

DEARBORN — Despite worldwide recognition as a video and television producer, one thing Detroiters Keith Famie never did was put a camera on his Italian father before he died. He now realizes what a mistake that was.

That oversight, coupled with Keith's love for ethnic cuisine and other cultures in general, eventually led to him recording a series of documentaries on the varied ethnic groups that make up the cosmopolitan Metro Detroit area. And while he's known as a famous chef, his television programs have all revolved around food (with the exception of a run on "Survivor") and these documentaries are all premiering with food-related events, Famie says the shows are really about our elders, people with fascinating stories who will not be here much longer and whose stories have not been recorded.

"Our elders carry the real story about what it was like to build America, and especially to build Detroit," Famie said in an interview done the day before he left for Lebanon, Jordan and Yemen to film on location for "Our Arab American Story," set to air on WXYZ-TV, Channel 7 in Detroit in December of this year.

"Our Italian Story" and "Our Polish Story" have already aired. "Our Greek Story" will air in November, a month prior to the Arab American documentary. Stories of other communities are planned.

Producing such a series is a natural progression for Famie, who is living up to his nickname, "The Adventure Chef." To date, he has produced dozens of food-as-adventure specials for national television, including the popular Food Network series "Keith Famie's Adventures." He's perhaps best known as a finalist on the series "Survivor," which catapulted him to international fame. Additionally, Famie has authored two books about travel, cooking and adventure — the last one, "You Really Haven't Been There Until You've Eaten The Food," was published by Clarkson Potter (Random House) in 2003. Most recently Famie created and produced "Ice Warriors," a reality-based documentary that

Famie is exploring Detroit's heritage, celebrating the most exciting of the cultures in a series of one hour specials that capture the essence of the genuine "Detroit story."



follows a special group of Red Wings to Russia to play a six game series. This was nominated for two Emmys.

Now he's kicked his Adventure Chef abilities up another notch, exploring the culinary treasures in his own backyard. "Our Story Of..." is a collection of marvelous human interest stories which promises to be of lasting importance to the chronicle of Detroit, and will follow its growth from a river town to a bustling, multi-cultural, industrial powerhouse.

Famie is exploring Detroit's heritage, celebrating the most exciting of the cultures in a series of one hour specials that capture the essence of the genuine "Detroit story." Each documentary in the series features personal interviews from community leaders — and unheralded neighbors — tracing the histories of numerous representatives from each community and focusing on the success — and sometimes failure — of their individual "American Dreams."

The series "is dedicated to the goal of enriching Metro Detroit by fostering a greater understanding of the individual ethnic communities that define us," according to the website, which also carries the belief in "Strength through heritage, peace through understanding, and unity through diversity."

The production of the Arab American documentary was facilitated largely by Russell Ebeid. "When he saw 'Our Italian Story' and learned that we were interested in doing a show on the Arab American community, he stepped up and said 'I want to support this,'" Famie said.

Ebeid, a Lebanese Christian, is President of the Glass USA Division of Guardian Industries Corp., the second-largest maker of industrial glass in the world, with 19,000 employees and revenues estimated at around \$5 billion.

"My dad was a knapsack immigrant," he said proudly during filming.

Other important sponsors of the series include ACCESS, the American Arab Chamber of Commerce, Comerica Bank, Bint Jebail Banquet Center, Ghafari Associates, New Yasmeen Bakery and Epoch Restaurant Group.

Famie said what has surprised him most so far in the filming of the documentary is how long Arab immigrants have been here and how much they have contributed to the building of the Detroit area.

"They've been here so long," he said, "and we meet people and associate with them and never know they're Arab."

Famie was also surprised to learn that the majority of Muslims are not Arab. They in fact constitute only 12% of the world's Muslim population.

And Famie delights in Detroit's multiple ethnicities. "There are 128 different languages spoken in Detroit," he said, adding that the automobile industry drew immigrants from all over the world. "Look how harmoniously we live together," he said. "That's a great message for the rest of the world."

Each of the documentaries in the series has a subtitle. "Reverence, Resourcefulness and Respect lead off the Arab American film.

"We have been so humbled by how hospitable the com-

munity has been," Famie said. "It's been such a joy to be with them. There's such an openness in their appreciation for what we're doing that it fuels my enthusiasm for the work."

The people and events Famie has used to shoot hours and hours of video that will have to be edited down to a mere one hour story include, Jamal Baadani, Ed Deeb and the Eastern Market, ACC's 28th Annual Civic and Humanitarian Awards Gala, Chef Habib Bazzi and the Bint Jebail Banquet Center, the Arab American Comedy Festival, Dr. Riad Farah, Sir Michael Berry, Imam Mohamad Mardini, the 2007 Festival of

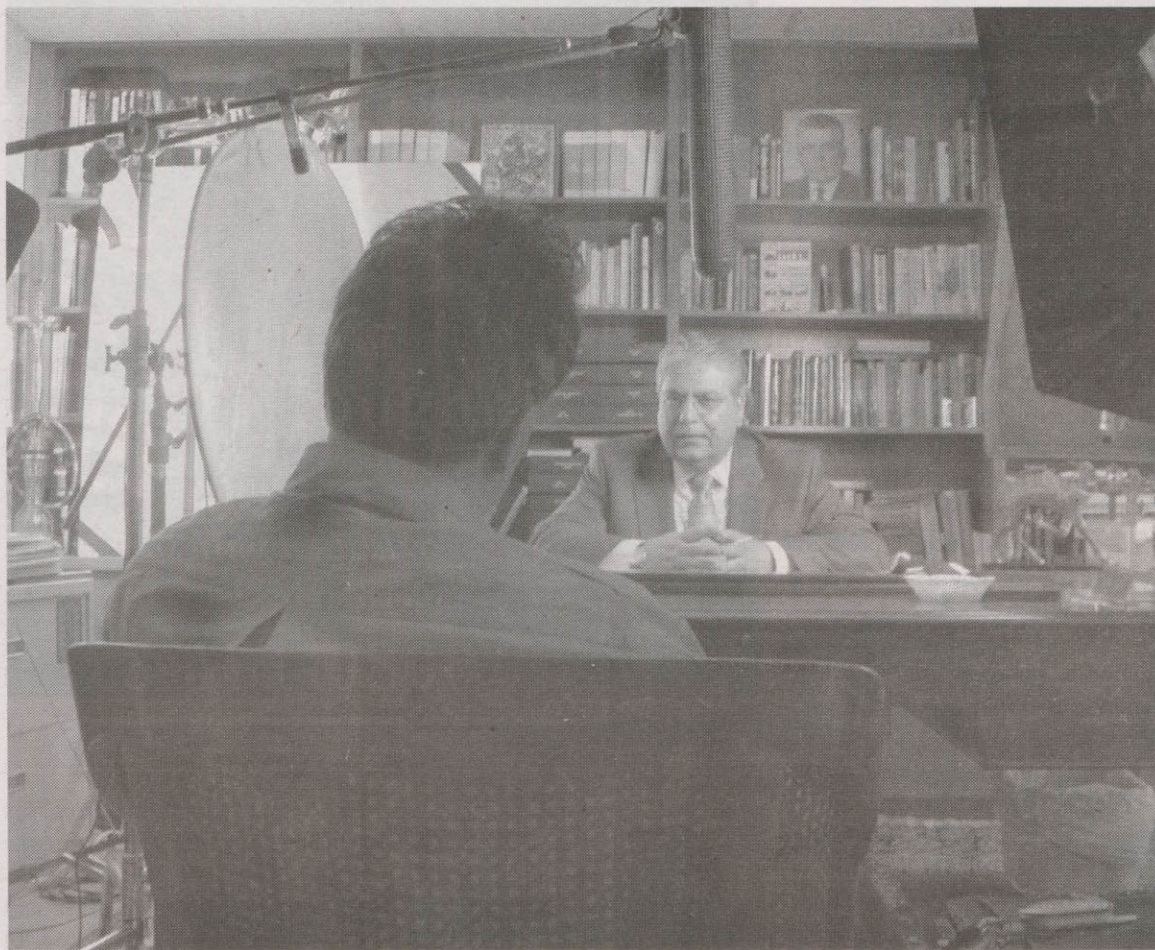
Peace, Amal and Phillip Berry-Brown, Nadeem Dlaikan, Ismael Ahmed, Dearborn boxer Tarick Salmaci, the Arabian Village Market, Noel Saleh, Anan Ameri, Dr. Marwan Abouljoud, Father George Shalhoub and St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church, Maha Freij, an Arab American wedding at the Greenfield Manor, the Arab American National Museum, the Muslim Unity Picnic, the 12th Annual Arab International Festival, the Dearborn Memorial Day Parade, and many others.

As with each of the other documentaries, a food festival media event precedes the airing. "Fla-

vors of the Arab World" will be held December 2, 2007 at the Rock Financial Show Place in Novi.

In the perfect living example of the multiethnic coexistence we enjoy in the area, Toni Wisne Sabina and Steve Sabina, a Polish couple, are sponsoring and hosting the evening as a tribute to the Arab community on all they have given Detroit.

Look for "Our Arab American Story," airing commercial-free on WXYZ-TV, Channel 7, in Detroit, during the month of December. Visit www.famie.com and www.ourstoryof.com for further information. ■



Above, producer Keith Famie interviews Osama Siblani, publisher of The Arab American News, on the growth of the community for "Our Arab American Story."

Below, Nadeem Dlaikan is filmed as he works in his studio on a ney, an end-blown wind instrument that has been prominent in Middle Eastern music for at least four thousand years, making it one of the oldest musical instruments still in use. It is the forerunner of the modern flute.



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