

For designer DiMeo, each family's story keeps his job fresh

BY AIMEE DOLLOFF
OF THE NEWS STAFF

"Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" carpenter Paul DiMeo enjoyed some quiet time by the ocean Sunday in between shooting scenes for the Milbridge episode. Legs casually crossed, DiMeo's guitar sat across his lap as he smoked a cigarette and occasionally sipped from a cup of coffee.

DiMeo has been with the show through all five seasons and usually is the first to shed a tear when the family's story is revealed to the design team. Although the idea behind the show is the same each week, DiMeo said it's easy to keep things fresh both for the audience and the crew.

"We have new families every week," he said. "It's a new build every week."

After recently filming the show's 100th episode, DiMeo said he has realized how short life is.

"The biggest thing I've learned is that life is random," he said. "It's a crapshoot. We're here one minute and we're gone the next."

DiMeo's favorite rooms to create are children's bedrooms where he can let his imagination run wild with any theme that's suitable.

"I like designing for anyone who's a kid, and that can be anyone between birth and death," he said.

Schedule

Monday, Sept. 10

Builder and design meetings and family moves out. No public spectator section open.

Tuesday, Sept. 11

Broughman Builders Inc. and crew march to the house and demolition begins. No public spectator section open.

Wednesday, Sept. 12,

through Friday, Sept. 14

Construction under way. Public spectator section open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. each day.

Saturday, Sept. 15

Construction completed and furniture and appliances are moved in. Public spectator section open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 16

"Move that Bus" - new house revealed. The crowd will be filmed at 10 a.m. and again at 2 p.m. when the bus is moved.

said. "It's the overcoming of disabilities that's so interesting."

When meeting the Ray-Smith family, DiMeo was touched by Joseph "Jo-Jo" Ray-Smith's reaction to a simple balloon.

"I think there are gifts that come along with autism," he

Surprisingly, DiMeo doesn't have any children of his own, but he said it's always best to work on and be surrounded by what keeps us young.

Originally from Media, Penn., and the youngest son of five children, DiMeo attended Point Park College in Pittsburgh and majored in theater arts where he began working on sets and pursuing his love of acting.

He has starred in several off-Broadway productions, and while living in New York and Los Angeles, Calif., continued building sets and renovating old buildings.

DiMeo has a direct connection with the Ray-Smith family's story. Like Ron Smith and the couple's 11-year-old daughter, Bayley, DiMeo was diagnosed with high cholesterol several years ago and actively campaigns to raise awareness.

"We all have disabilities," he

said.

Coming from a family of teachers, DiMeo also has a special respect for the work that Brittany Ray and Ron Smith do as teachers.

"I can't tell you who the twenty-second president of the United States was ... but I can tell you who my third-grade teacher was," DiMeo said.

DiMeo also is partial to the North East. While living in New York, he spent six months in Dover-Foxcroft and also has a fondness for blueberries.

"Look at what we're looking at," he said, pointing to the ocean.

Other members of the "Extreme Makeover" team on board for the Ray-Smith project include design team leader and host Ty Pennington, designers John Littlefield and Eduardo Xol, and newcomer Didiayer Snyder.



BANGOR DAILY NEWS PHOTO BY GABOR DEGRE

Paul DiMeo, one of the original members of the cast of ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," is known for his passion for his work, shaping the children's rooms on the show. "I like designing for anyone who's a kid, and that can be anyone between birth and death," he said.