

# A rich life

CHRISTINE HOLLISTER

## Lead role in "Annie" hits personal note for Brighton actor

It's 3 p.m. the day of the opening night's performance of 'Annie.' Dave Rhoades, who is playing the role of Daddy Warbucks, jumps off the treadmill in his Brighton home to answer a media call.

He is eager to talk about a role he believes he was born to play.

### A Family Favorite

The move "Annie" has always held a soft spot in the hearts of the Rhoades family.

Rhoades' wife, Jeanie, posted on her personal blog Feb. 18, "Rhoades Family Trivia: Q: How many times did the Rhoades kids watch the 'Annie' movie during their growing up years? A: 8,362 times. Minimum. Every cassette or videotaped recording of our kids at anytime between 1984 and 2007 include, at some point, some rendition of some song or another from the musical 'Annie.' True story."

Jeanie then wrote this note on her blog directed toward her children: "Watch the first scene with little orphan Annie," she said. "Hear her words and feel her heart and you will understand a little something more about your own dad's story as a kid who was adopted."

Dave Rhoades said one of the reasons he enjoys the story of "Annie" so much might be because he feels like he can relate to the tale.

"I was adopted when I was just a few days old," he said. "It's what I've known all of my life, but I've never felt unloved."

Rhoades said though he doesn't have a relationship with his biological parents, he is fortunate to be surrounded by many loving family members.

"Even though most identify 'Annie' with the song 'Tomorrow' my favorite song of the production is 'Maybe'—a message of hope in seemingly hopeless circumstances," he said.

"Just thinking about hopes



PHOTO PROVIDED

Lorelei Thorne as Annie and Dave Rhoades as Daddy Warbucks.

and dreams and 'I wonder what they're doing' really kinds of hits home for me."

### Taking One for the Team

Rhoades said he told Shauna Dunlap, the show's executive producer/director/choreographer, at his audition, "OK, if you pick me for this role, I'll shave my head."

"Good,"

Dunlap replied. "Because I was gonna tell you that you would have to shave your head anyway."

Rhoades gathered his family to let them be in on the fun.

"When we did the Daddy Warbucks thing, we had all of the kids and grandkids over and the grandkids shaved my head," he said. "I didn't want them to be freaked out when they saw me, so I let them help."

"My wife and I have been married 29 years and this is the

first time she's seen me bald," he laughed.

### The Learning Curve

Though Rhoades had watched the movie version of "Annie" numerous times, he said he was surprised to find out how different the musical was from the movie.

"I was kind of a little amazed at how different the Broadway play is from the movie," he said. "There were a couple of songs I'd never heard before, so it was quite a learning curve for me."

He enlisted the help of the production's music director, Don Dupree, of Moore Music in Brighton, for help with his songs. And almost daily, Rhoades said he studied his lines while exercising on his treadmill at home.

"By the time I'm finished going through my lines, I'm finishing up my workout," he said.

### "Annie" Presented by the Prairie Playhouse

Feb 26, 27 & March 18, 19 and 20 at 7 p.m.; matinee Feb. 27 at 2 p.m.

Prairie View High School  
Auditorium  
12909 E. 120th Ave., Henderson  
Tickets: \$7 at the door  
Visit [www.prairieplayhouse.com](http://www.prairieplayhouse.com)  
for information

### Sandy

"I have my stamp all over the play, from props like our personal 12-foot Christmas tree to the family dog whose name is actually Sandy," Rhoades said.

"It will be her debut," he added.

Rhoades said his daughter found the dog at a landfill nearly 10 years ago. The stray was skinny and skittish, but his daughter was finally able to coax the dog inside.

"She wanted to bring her home and I said, 'You are not bringing a junkyard dog back to the house,'" Rhoades said. "But she convinced me and now Sandy is just part of the family."

"We named her 'Sandy' because the kids were so into 'Annie' at the time," he continued. "It was going to be either that or 'Chewbacca' because we liked 'Star Wars' too," he laughed, "but 'Sandy' has been a good fit."

Jeanie blogged about Sandy's debut performance: "Sandy-the-Dog played Sandy-the-Dog in Prairie Playhouse's production of 'Annie,' at tonight's opening night! What frolic or mayhem could have occurred did not. Though I feared the worst, Sandy's performance was flawless. She did it! She stayed close to Annie, she obeyed the commands to 'sit' and 'stay' until beckoned by Annie. Sandy was amazing."

### The Production

Auditions for "Annie" were held last October and the cast began rehearsing in

November. Rhoades said he's been in other roles in community theater, but has especially enjoyed working with the other actors in "Annie."

"Grace (Carla Baldwin), Annie (Lorelei Thorne) and I have a fun time on stage and Annie and I have great chemistry," he said. "I am the father of five grown children, four of whom are girls, now women, and it is as if I'm acting with one of my own daughters at that age."

"The ensemble is a wonderful mix of backgrounds, ages and experiences and the orphans are spectacular with all the choreography," he said. "I was amazed at one of our first few rehearsals when they practiced 'Hard Knock Life' how right-on they were."

Rhoades said he's also enjoyed working with Dunlap.

"Shauna is a great director that really challenges me at my personal best as an actor and probably at times endures my dancing expertise—or lack there of," he said.

### Career & Family

Rhoades has worked as a computer technical instructor for 11 years, he served previously as a senior pastor in churches around the Midwest for most of his married life, he said.

He and his wife have five children and five grandchildren, with another on the way within the month. The children have taken on their dad's legacy by getting involved in various ministries. Their son, Rocky, is a worship leader at Northern Hills Christian Church in Brighton and their children formed the popular "HeavenFest" concerts. Jeanie now works full time hours coordinating the HeavenFest event.

Though Dave is no longer a pastor himself, he works with the ministries at the church, mainly with the children's ministries, he said.

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