

Elder Alumnus Fulfilling His Dream in LA

By Kurt Backscheider

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Matthew Godbey can't imagine working in any other field than the arts. "I had to be an artist," he said. "That's who I am." The West Side native followed his dreams and for the past 17 years has been working as a painter, actor and producer in Los Angeles.

An Elder High School graduate who grew up in Price Hill, Godbey packed up his car and drove west in 1995. "I acted and painted in Cincinnati, but the opportunities for a career in the arts were limited. I did everything I could there," he said. "I decided I had to make a move. It was either going to be New York or LA. I flipped a coin and LA won."

Despite not knowing a soul in Los Angeles before moving there, Godbey has been able to make a living with steady acting work in television, movies and commercials, which also affords him the opportunity to pursue his first true love of painting and show his art in the many galleries throughout LA.

He said his interest in art developed at a young age and he spent hours drawing as a kid. "I was always an artist," he said. "I always thought I was going to be an artist and a painter." While art remains his passion, Godbey said he's glad he was introduced to acting when he was a student at the University of Cincinnati. He later transferred to the College of Mount St. Joseph and earned a degree in education as a backup in case art and acting didn't pan out. "I went out for a play when I was in college," he said. "I didn't get the part, but I caught the acting bug from that audition. "I enjoy the collaborative and creative process of movie-making and television," he said.

Some of his television credits include "NCIS: Los Angeles," "The Young and the Restless," "Nip/Tuck," "Charmed" and "Passions." He also recently filmed scenes in the new comedy "Whitney." Godbey said he's worked as a dialect coach and acting coach as well, and he's been a producer on the movies "Blood Moon," "Pennies" and "Luxury of Love." His wife, Diana Valentine, also works in the entertainment industry. She is a script supervisor and has worked on several movies and television shows.

Godbey's mother, Carolyn, said she and her husband, Al, who still live in the Purcell Avenue home where they raised four sons, are happy Matthew has been able to follow his dreams and work in LA. "We're very proud of him," she said. "We're proud of all of our sons. They are all successful in their own way."

Matthew Godbey said although he misses Cincinnati and doesn't often get many chances to come back home to visit, he has no regrets about making the journey west in 1995. "I'm always doing something in art, television or the movies. I bounce around and keep busy," he said. "My life is a life in the arts."