

The Amherst Tigers Football Booster's will hold a Chinese Auction table at the Tigers Homecoming game at 7 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 28 at Amherst High School, 4301 Main St. Winners will be drawn during half-time. Tickets are 25 for \$5, 50 for \$8 or 75 for \$10. Tickets will also be available for the Football Booster Clubs annual raffle. For more information, call 362-8100.

Local boy makes good

Emmy winner has roots in area

by **ANDREA KIMBRIEL**
Reporter



Daniel Kumiega with his girlfriend Alexis Nelson at the Emmy Awards.

Daniel Kumiega is a great example of "local boy makes good" said his uncle, Kevin Sexton, of Clarence.

Kumiega, 26, who grew up in Clarence, and also lived in East Amherst, recently won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Special Visual Effects for a Miniseries, Movie or a Special for his computer-generated animation on an episode of "Nightmares & Dreamscapes: From the Stories of Stephen King." The eight-show series ran on TNT in 2006.

He also received an Emmy nomination for his special effects work on an episode of the NBC show "Heroes."

The Creative Arts Emmy Awards ceremony was held on Saturday, Sept. 8.

"It's kind of unexpected, as you can imagine," said Kumiega of his award.

It's especially significant considering that he has only had a full-time animation job for a year. Before that, he was working for the Ritz Carlton and doing freelance animation for friends in the industry who needed help finishing projects on time.

"Yeah, I was surprised," said his mother, Barbara Kumiega, about his nomination. "He hasn't been working in the industry for very many years. I'm very happy and proud for him. He worked very hard."

The family had a get-together on Saturday, Sept. 15 to watch the airing of the awards program, said Barbara Kumiega, who lives in Clarence. The family was unable to attend the ceremony in California because Kumiega only received one extra ticket, which he gave to his girlfriend, Alexis Nelson.

"He said, 'I'll take you next time, mom,'" she said.

He is now the lead computer-generated imagery animator for Stargate Digital in South Pasadena, Calif.

He was hired as a temporary worker for the "Nightmares & Dreamscapes" episode that earned him an Emmy — "Battleground." In the show, a man is attacked by an army of toy soldiers. There is no dialogue, so the focus is on the visual effects, said Kumiega. He animated exploding soldiers, and toy army jeeps.

"It was a lot of work, but it came together well," he said.

After that episode, he was hired full time.

"I just wanted someone to give me a chance. I knew I could stick around," he said.

Kumiega said the industry is becoming more competitive but doesn't seem to be growing quickly. Finding a job without much experience can be difficult.

Stargate Digital develops the com-

puter-generated stunt doubles for "Heroes." In the Emmy-nominated episode, "Five Years Gone," Kumiega animated the character Nathan flying.

For the "Heroes" doubles, a photo-realistic model of the actor is created using a body scan.

"My job is to rig it — essentially putting bones in it. Suiting it up so you can move it," he said.

Kumiega works with a small team of five people.

"The guys I work with are hilarious. It's like a three-ring circus," he said. "Heroes' is a lot of fun. I get to do things I feel like I wouldn't normally get to do."

Some of the special effects on "Heroes" are feature-film level — good experience if he wants to work on movies in the future.

"It's not boring, like making television logos or anything," he said.

His other projects include the angel wings in the show "Saving Grace," and animation on the "Eli Stone Show," which is scheduled to premiere on ABC in the next several months.

Kumiega recalled finding an antidote to boredom in a computer design class while a student at Lancaster High School. He finished projects early so he could spend the extra time experimenting with the program.

When he was college-searching, he knew what he wanted to do but wasn't sure what it was called.

"I always thought he would do something well in artistic work. He's very good with details," said Barbara Kumiega.

Kumiega graduated from Savannah College of Art and Design in 2003. He focused on computer art and 3D animation.

"He was exposed to animation at college and became very adept at the most advanced software in pretty short order," said Sexton.

Sexton said he learned in the summer that his nephew was nominated for an Emmy.

"Two years working in the business and getting an Emmy is pretty outstanding," he said.

Kumiega said he was fortunate to have his supervisors put his name on the Emmy submission that won. Creating the special effects for a show is a team effort, but a limited number of names can be entered for the awards.

That's one of the benefits of working for a small studio, he said. In larger companies the supervisors and head artists would put their names in for the awards, and someone like him would not get recognition.

"We all did a lot of work, and it came out great. It was the luck of the draw that I got it this time," he said.