



# GrowingUpLocal

Strong roots and great opportunity makes growing up in Maplewood and South Orange pretty sweet.



Above: David Tillman  
Below: Ethan Greene



## A Perfect Start

From Columbia High to behind the scene in Hollywood these two local products prove that the future starts at home

BY JENNIFER GRIOLA

Two little boys, one from Maplewood, one from South Orange, meet at Beth El's Hebrew School in the late '80s, go on to form a great friendship and become classmates at Columbia High School. But after graduation in 2000, David Tillman and Ethan Greene appeared destined for the occasional catch-up at high school reunions: Tillman headed to the University of Texas to pursue filmmaking, while Greene went to Massachusetts and Amherst College to study pre-med and music. After graduating from Amherst, however, Greene decided to take up music, not medicine, and he, too, headed to Texas, to Rice University, where he received a master's degree in music composition.

Fast forward to 2010, when Tillman, by then a film producer and editor, needed music for his latest project. First he and a friend convinced the director to use original music for the film. Then Tillman turned to his old Columbia High School classmate.

And before you know it, the two childhood buddies had helped put together the companion documentary to Robert Redford's latest feature length movie, *The Conspirator*.

While Redford's project is a fictionalized account of those who plotted to kill President Lincoln, Tillman is a producer and editor for the film that examines the evidence against those convicted in the conspiracy. And Greene is the movie's music composer. *The Conspirator: The Plot to Kill Lincoln*, is packaged as a companion to the film, and was recently released on DVD.

The documentary, rather than being different from the feature film, expands on the film in some areas and fills in the blanks in others. Clips from the film run throughout. Working

with The American Film Company, the producer of *The Conspirator*, was the fulfillment of a dream of sorts for Tillman.

As a sophomore at Columbia High School, Tillman took a television production class that required him to do “man on the street” interviews along Maplewood Avenue during the 1997 filming of the movie *One True Thing* (starring Meryl Streep and Renée Zellweger). Tillman took that assignment, expanded on it and essentially produced his first documentary: *Hollywood Invades Maplewood*.

He credits Columbia High with giving him many of his first experiences in television, film and editing. Tillman laughs that he can say he first learned editing

the old-fashioned cut-and-paste way but by the end of high school had moved to digital editing, which is still the standard of editing used in television and filmmaking today.

There were two other important influences right here in Maplewood: Tillman’s parents. “I owe everything to (my mother) and my father...they really nurtured my love for filmmaking,” he says. Maureen and Wayne Tillman have been residents of Maplewood since 1982. Wayne Tillman, a clinical psychologist, and Maureen, a clinical social worker, have offices in Maplewood and Morristown, NJ. Maureen Tillman is the founder of College with Confidence, a psychotherapy service that helps young people transition from teenager to adult.

In the case of Ethan Greene, his family was supportive, but surprised; he had done a lot of music in high school, but had seemed to consider it a hobby, so Greene says it came as a bit of shock to his family that he was not going to go to medical school after college. He eventually won their support with his passion for music. Greene is the son of Rebecca and Peter Greene, both attorneys. The family has resided in South Orange since 1981.

While Greene was always a fan of music and participated in jazz band and ensembles in both middle and high school, it was his brother Abe who really fostered his passion for music. “He was the one who nudged me in the direction of music for most of my life,” Greene says, including introducing him to an eclectic mix from chamber to orchestra to electronic and beyond. Greene also credits Vernon Miller, a bassist and South Orange Middle School Jazz Band lead, and Matt Krempasky, the former Columbia High School band director, for inspiring him.



*Mary Surratt was the only woman convicted in Lincoln's assassination, the first female to be executed by the U.S. government. What was her role in the 16th president's death? The Plot to Kill Lincoln: The Conspirator weaves together excerpts from the movie with historical records and expert interviews to tell the dramatic story.*

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