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Former NTID Students Make Super Bowl Ad

January 29, 2008

Former students from RIT's National Technical Institute for the Deaf will be featured in a groundbreaking Pepsi commercial during the Super Bowl's pre-game show.

There will be no sound during the 60-second ad, but the sign language used will be captioned.

Entitled "Bob's House," the commercial is a take on a popular joke in the deaf community. Buddies arriving in a neighborhood don't know which house belongs to their deaf friend. So they honk the car horn until all of the neighbors react to the noise. The house without the reaction must be their friend's house.

The commercial features Darren Therriault, who received an associate's degree in electromechanical technology from NTID in 1985 and a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from RIT/NTID in 1989. He lives in Schaumburg, Ill. and is an application configuration specialist for Pepsi.

"I'm hoping it will raise awareness for the whole deaf community," Therriault said of the commercial. "I've always wanted to do something like this."

Wayne Betts Jr., a former RIT/NTID student who studied at the School of Film and Animation, was a production assistant during the Jan. 12 and 13 filming of the commercial in Los Angeles.

The exact time of the broadcast is not available; the pre-game show airs Sunday from 2 to 6 p.m. EST on the FOX network; Therriault said he was told the commercial would air sometime immediately before the kickoff.

Pepsi is also sponsoring the closed captioning of the Super Bowl broadcast.

The commercial is already creating a buzz in the deaf community, but it's not the first



Pepsi employees Darren Therriault (passenger) and Brian Dowling (driver) in "Bob's House" commercial. (Photo courtesy of Pepsi.) [See full-size photo](#)

time a national commercial featured deaf actors using sign language. In 1986, McDonald's aired a commercial featuring Beth Ann Bull and Andrew Rubin, both former NTID students.

Pepsi officials say their ad was the brainchild of a Pepsi manager from Texas who is a member of the company's EnAble team, an employee network with a mission to promote a more inclusive environment for people with disabilities. The ad was pre-screened by the National Association for the Deaf, which gave it a thumbs up.

"I feel very strongly about it because I want everyone to be equal during activities in their lives," Therriault said. "I told Pepsi and they asked if I wanted to be in the commercial because it would increase awareness of deaf people all over."

Although he wanted to shed light on the deaf community, Therriault said he's surprised at the attention the commercial is already getting. He's on his way to Pepsi headquarters in New York this week to talk to Pepsi's CEO about it.

"I'm very surprised," he said. "I thought it would be no big deal, just be a little commercial. But I'm very proud."

Therriault said he hopes to attend NTID's 40th Alumni Reunion in Rochester June 26-28.

To see the commercial and a clip of it being made, visit [Bob's House](#) at Pepsi.com.

Rochester Institute of Technology

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