

# Alumna writes for television

Former Truman student co-executive produces popular TV show "Reba"

Erin Clark  
for the Index

Two years after Lara Runnels graduated from Truman, "Boy Meets World" aired for the first time.

Runnels was not a playwright yet, but she would become a significant part of the popular television show.

Runnels and her writing partner, Patti Carr, wrote nine episodes during the last three seasons of "Boy Meets World," she said.

"We wrote the episode where Cory and Topanga got married," Runnels said. "And we also wrote the episode where Cory kissed the girl in the ski lodge."

Runnels and Carr also masterminded a script where Cory goes back in time after an electric shock and one in which Shawn's ex-girlfriends kidnap him on Valentine's Day.

Senior Sheila Bauer said "Boy Meets World" is a favorite.

"It's exciting that a Truman alumna wrote episodes for one of my favorite shows," Bauer said.

When Runnels graduated with her theater degree in 1991, it was from Northeast Missouri State University and when "Boy Meets World" first aired in 1991, it was not the household name it is today.

Dan Peterson, Truman's director of bands, said he's not surprised with Runnels' success.

"She would be good at [writing scripts], I'm sure," Peterson said. "She always had a bright smile on her face. She was enthusiastic, ready to do her part."

The qualities Peterson mentioned have taken Runnels far. She said she has worked on many shows other than "Boy Meets World" and had a hand in animated ventures such as "Cat-Dog" and "Kim Possible."

Right now, she is a writer and co-executive producer for the WB's "Reba," starring country western singer Reba McEntire.

"Reba McEntire's really great, very professional, very nice and down-to-earth," Runnels said.

Runnels said she is grateful for those she's worked with.

"I have been really lucky to where every show that I've worked on, the actors have been very nice," Runnels said.

Another of her favorite celebrities



Damian Dovarganes/AP Wire  
Country superstar Reba McEntire, center, and actor JoAnna Garcia, right and actor Steve Howey appear on the set of The WB's "Reba," at the 20th Century Fox studios in Los Angeles. Alumna Lara Runnels is the co-executive producer for the show and screenwrites episodes with a writing team.

is Michael Chiklis, who plays on FX's "The Shield" and stars as The Thing in "The Fantastic Four."

"He was on Daddio," Runnels said. "He is just so nice."

"Daddio" was another sitcom-style program Runnels worked on briefly. It premiered in 2000 and ran for half a season. Other shows have lasted much longer, like "Reba," which is in its fifth season.

"That's another really nice thing," Runnels said. "I've just been really lucky to get on shows that have stayed on for a long time."

Runnels said the eight writers at "Reba" get inspiration for story ideas from many places.

"It's kind of a combination of things," Runnels said. "If something happens in your life that you think might apply to characters on the show,

or if there's a story arc. Last season one of the characters had an alcohol problem. You develop stories based on what has to happen next."

Runnels said writers brainstorm together for plots. Then one writer will take the assignment and bring back a first draft for revision by the group.

After the second draft comes in, the actors do a table-read of the script. That means they sit down and read it out loud, she said.

"We hear what works, we hear what doesn't work, if jokes are funny, if the story makes sense," Runnels said. "Then the whole group [of writers] may go through to make some revisions together."

"I've just been really lucky to get on shows that have stayed on for a long time."

Lara Runnels  
Alumna

## Allergy problems interfere with life, class and health

Respiratory illnesses are prevalent on campus this year

Katie Curry  
for the Index

Imagine not being able to listen in class because of your own sneezing or waking every morning with your eyes swollen shut.

Allergies keep many Truman students, including senior Krista Anthonopoulos, from going on with their daily lives.

"I have problems sleeping because my nose gets all stuffy, and I wake up and I can't breathe," Anthonopoulos said. "Or my eyes really itch, so I'll wake up and I'll gouge my eyes out from scratching them so hard."

She said her class experience wasn't the only thing suffering. Her appearance was as well.

"[Sometimes] I look like I've gotten into a boxing match or something and got punched in the eye," Anthonopoulos said.

Brenda Higgins, director of the Student Health Center, described allergies as an overreaction by the immune system to something ordinarily harmless, such as mold or grass. She said allergies can develop at any time in one's life, and often students come to Truman and have no problems their freshman year, only to have severe allergic reactions in subsequent years.

Anthonopoulos said this description mirrored her situation.

"I never had allergies before coming to Truman," Anthonopoulos said. "Every year it begins around Freshman Week and ends around the third week of September."

This can be especially problematic if the allergen is something important to one's health, like medication.

"You could have taken penicillin for 15 years and then become allergic," Higgins said. "It can occur at anytime as the body just recognizes something as an enemy and responds to it."

Higgins said the symptoms one might encounter while dealing with an allergic reaction include itchy, watery eyes, sneez-

ing, dry or sore throat, puffy, swollen eyes, stuffy nose and general swelling in the sinuses and eyes.

Junior Brittany Anderson, who also suffers from severe environmental allergies, said she also had severe troubles with her symptoms during class.

"It's kind of embarrassing," Anderson said. "Sometimes you sit there and you just can't stop sneezing."

Allergies are not just a threat when one is outdoors, however. Higgins said a lot of people are affected by dust mites or molds in their houses.

"Particularly students who are living in old buildings or old rental housing, there may be a lot of molds in the basement," Higgins said. "They may be responding more to the molds than to the environmental allergies outside."

Buildings on campus without air conditioning might also contribute to the problem, Higgins said.

"We have a lot of students tell us that when it's hot in the summer and they don't have air conditioning, they sleep by the window with the window open, and they wake up all stuffed up the morning," Higgins said. "Part of that may be an allergic reaction because you may pick up some allergens sleeping there by the [window], and it doesn't drain well, because you are lying horizontally."

The health center sees students daily for the problem, Higgins said.

"Respiratory illnesses are probably the No. 1 thing that we see, and that certainly includes allergies," Higgins said. "It's very prevalent in this area in general."

Higgins said she recommends several medications that are readily available for students over the counter at most pharmacies. Benadryl, one of the older remedies for allergy symptoms, still is commonly used but also causes drowsiness.

Higgins said there are also newer medications available, such as Claritin, Allegra and Zyrtec, which do not have many side effects, and Claritin now is

### Helpful tips for recognizing and controlling allergies

#### Symptoms

- Runny nose
- Red, swollen, itchy, watery eyes
- Roof of mouth itches
- Coughing or wheezing
- Headaches
- Burning or scratchy throat
- Skin rashes or hives

#### Prevention

- Track daily pollen count
- Keep windows closed and use air conditioning in the house and car
- Stay away from furry pets as much as possible
- Control humidity indoors
- Plan ahead and take allergy medication before symptoms become severe
- Avoid smoke from cigarettes and wood fires

available over the counter. She said these medicines also can be packaged with decongestants, such as Claritin-D or Allegra-D.

To treat swollen, puffy eyes, effective antihistamine eye-drops are available.

"A lot of times people are confused," Higgins said. "[They think they] have pink eye or bacterial conjunctivitis, when

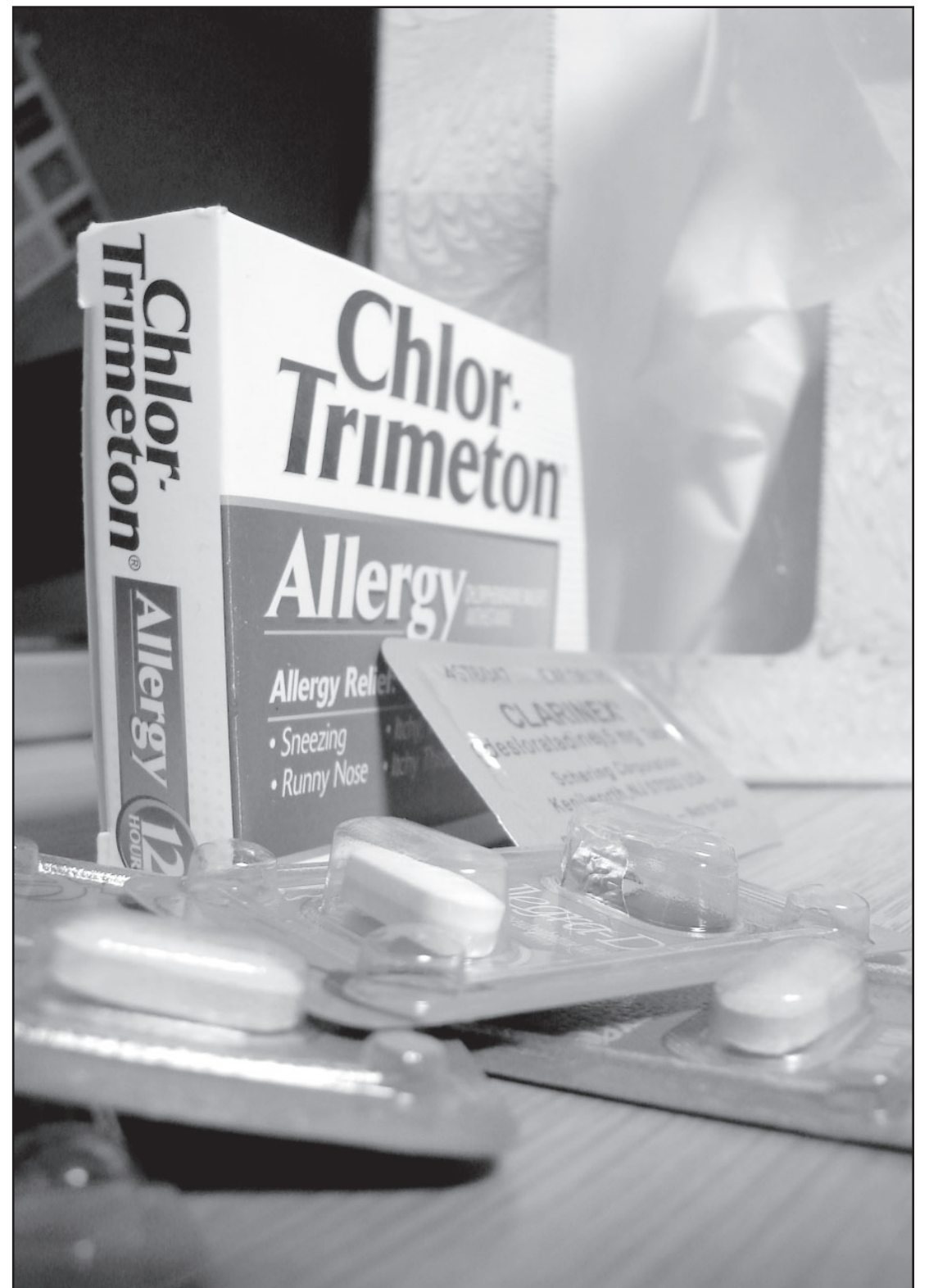


Photo Illustration by Lisa Margetis/Index  
Allergy medications can provide temporary relief from symptoms. The health center can write students prescriptions for such popular medicines as Allegra and Zyrtec.

really what they have is allergic conjunctivitis, which may easily be treated with Visine-A over the counter, which is an antihistamine eye-drop."

Higgins said these medicines usually can be found at a reasonable price but suggests that chronic sufferers consider obtaining an ongoing prescription.

"There is something called

allergy immunotherapy where we inject minute amounts of what [patients] are allergic to so that their system builds up a tolerance," Higgins said. "We have a number of students who we give allergy shots to."

Regardless, Higgins said the health center is ready and willing to help students in any way. "Generally, we recommend

trying the over-the-counter [medicines] first, but if they are ineffective, come [to the health center] and we can try some of the prescription medications to see if they work better," Higgins said. "What we offer is basically diagnosis and treatment, and we can write prescriptions if students require prescription medications to treat their symptoms."