



Synopses of **MADISON HEIGHTS** Video Episodes

The Ties That Bind

Follows the Garcia family as it attempts to recover from the devastating loss of its eldest son. The impact is greatest on younger brother Ricky, who had been an excellent student, but recently has done poorly in school. Meanwhile, Ricky's teacher, David Harper, is struggling with his own problems. His father has just died, and his relationship with his mother is difficult at best. At first, Harper is impatient with Ricky's apparent lack of effort. But when he comes to understand what is causing it, his attitude changes, not only towards Ricky but towards his own mother.

Running Scared

Deals with the impact of a family's decision not to vaccinate their child on a community and on a friendship. Amy Tran, an Asian-American, has been friends since high school with Charlene Miller. But in light of her brother's severe reaction to a pertussis vaccine years earlier, Amy decides not to have her own son vaccinated when he and Charlene's son start kindergarten. Charlene's husband is outraged, particularly because of a recent outbreak of pertussis in Madison Heights. Arguing that Amy's decision is subjecting other children to unnecessary risks, he leads a protest against the Tran family that culminates in a dramatic confrontation between himself and the Trans.

A Day in the Life

Follows an unemployed African-American woman named Roberta through a long day of frustration and despair. Despite her best efforts, Roberta's attempts to find work lead nowhere. As she struggles through the day, Roberta endures a variety of trying and dehumanizing experiences. Towards the end of the episode, we learn that Roberta is the single parent of a young son, whom she is desperately trying to shield from the harsh realities of a life lived in poverty.

Homeward Bound

The story of a father and his adult son who attempt to come to terms with each other after several years of estrangement. When Stan Radzinski has a stroke, his son Tom, feels he has no choice but to leave his own wife and son behind, and fly across the country to care for his ailing father. During the course of their time together, they finally deal with a devastating family tragedy that took place years before – a tragedy that led to the enormous chasm between them.

Street Smart

Looks at the impact of gang life on two brothers, Omar and Ramon Vasquez. As a result of a crime committed during his brief affiliation with a gang, twelve year old Omar is sentenced

to six years in a juvenile detention facility. When he is finally released, Omar tries to get his life back on track, but faces a variety of serious obstacles that stand in his way. At the same time, he discovers that his younger brother (Ramon) has also been seduced by the lure of gang life. Ultimately, Omar must not only convince himself to persevere, but must also persuade his brother to renounce life in a gang, continue his schooling and develop his natural talent as an artist.

Miracle Workers (parts I and II)

Looks at a collision of cultures played out against the backdrop of the U.S. medical system. When five year old Maria is brought to the hospital by her non-English speaking Hispanic parents, the child is in serious need of medical attention. Her parents resist, however, because they are more comfortable having her treated by a “curandero,” or spiritual healer. Maria’s American doctor, Phillip Hansen, views the curandero’s efforts as useless or even worse, because, in his view, they are preventing Maria from getting the care she needs. While trying to cope with Maria’s deteriorating medical condition, the driven Dr. Hansen must also deal with his crumbling marriage and generally dysfunctional family. But it’s when his father suffers a life-threatening injury and lay near death in a comatose state that Hansen finally comes to terms with the man he’s become, and vows to do whatever is necessary to put his life back in order.

God Bless the Child

The story of two desperate characters whose lives intersect. Kevin McCauley is a ten year old boy who lives with his mother and her abusive boyfriend, and struggles in school with a learning disability. Mr. Jenkins is the school janitor who, despite his own battle with growing dementia, teaches Kevin to read. Although each of them faces formidable obstacles, Kevin and Jenkins manage to reach each other in a way that is both touching and life-affirming.

Echoes

Traces the efforts of Susan Gennaro, a woman who has recently been released from prison after six and a half years of incarceration, as she attempts to re-build a relationship with her ten year old daughter, Katie. During the course of the story, Katie must confront a variety of painful truths, including the fact that her mother is a recovering alcoholic who served time because of a fatal auto accident caused by her drinking.

Small World

Eleven year old Maria Betancourt is trying to fit in at school, after she and her family have recently moved to Madison Heights. She is so desperate not to appear “different” from other students that she doesn’t let on about her family’s South American origins. She even goes so far as to tell everyone her name is actually Mary. But when her aunt from Colombia comes to stay with the Betancourts for several weeks, Maria’s deception slowly begins to unravel. Eventually, she must come to terms with her own identity and accept her family’s history.