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The StarPhoenix

SECTION  
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# TV Times

## **BRICK BY BRICK**

Nothing says  
home, sweet  
home like

**All for One  
with Debbie  
Travis**

Sundays - CBC



# Community SPIRIT

**D**ebbie Travis has some first-hand experience with local heroes. It goes back to when she was a 12-year-old in the north of England.

When her father died, the small village in which she and her family lived came together to see them through some very bad times.

"My mum was 33," she recalls. "She had four children under the age of 12, and a newborn baby, and no money. And within hours of my father dying, the community came together."

Travis says that memory comes back to her constantly as she travels the country looking for places where that sense of community still exists.

And those places all add up to the series ***All for One with Debbie Travis***, which makes its official debut Sunday, Oct. 17, on CBC Television after a sneak preview in late September.

The villagers of her childhood, Travis says, meant the difference between growing up in a family or in an orphanage or foster home.

"In those days – in the 1960s – you were put into care in Britain. And if she hadn't been able to support us, we would have been taken away.

"And through the local church, through the vicar, these women came together. And I remember boxes of clothes coming, food coming. And for six months they fed us, until my mum could get on her feet and go get a job."

In ***All for One***, the queen of home reno is celebrating average Canadians who keep that spirit of community alive.

From Atlantic Canada through Quebec and Ontario and into the West, Travis has found a host of ordinary people doing extraordinary things for their communities.

Each one, she says, is "the go-to person of the community."

BY BRIAN GORMAN

ON SCREEN:

ALL FOR ONE WITH DEBBIE TRAVIS

SUNDAY; CBC

PHOTO: CBC

To recognize them and reward them for their accomplishments, Travis stages what she calls the modern-day equivalent of an "old-fashioned barn raising."

There are three elements to the show, Travis says. The main focus is on the unsung local hero, "the glue of a community." The second is the community itself. And the third is the organizing of the community to build something that makes the unsung hero's life a bit easier – and helps him or her continue the good work.

"It's not someone who jumps into a river to save a dog," she says of the people featured in the show. "It's not somebody who is a victim. It's somebody who is constantly doing things for other people, making sure the community sticks together."

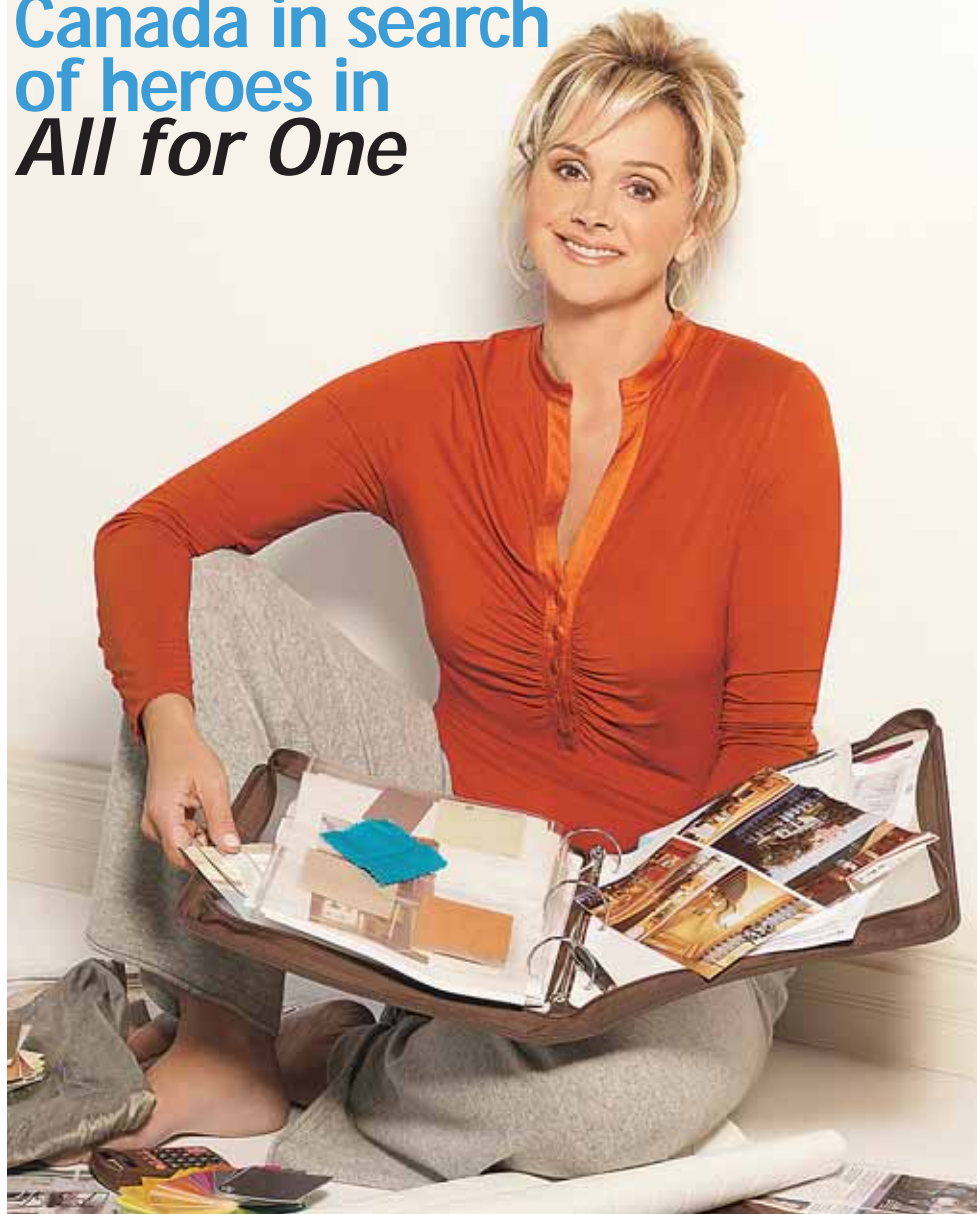
One episode is about a man who has turned his house into a drop-in centre for the local skateboarders. The community project was to build a deck and a small house on his property that he could use for the boys. Another involved a complete kitchen remodelling for a woman who cooks for neighbours who, for one reason or another, can't feed themselves.

Travis says one of her favourite experiences was her week in the impoverished North Preston area of Halifax.

"It's the community that Canada has forgotten. It's an African-Canadian community that has basically been dumped. The people of Halifax just don't know.

"They don't have a shop. They don't have a video store. They don't have pavement. They don't have a regular doctor; they have a doctor two hours a week. And our hero is the

## Debbie Travis crosses Canada in search of heroes in *All for One*



Travis:cracking the whip

go-to person. If you have a stomach ache at 3 o'clock in the morning, you go to Rosie's house. She makes everything happen for these people – 4,000 people."

Communities range from such places as North Preston to an Italian neighbourhood in Montreal and the Toronto suburb of Oakville. "These aren't neighbourhoods," Travis says. "A neighbourhood is a collection of houses. A community is everyone around you."

As for the "barn raising," this involves a week in which the community comes together and undertakes a major construction project.

Travis arrives Saturday and "starts cracking my whip." Through the following week, the

community works "24 hours a day."

"I supply the materials and the tools," she says. "But other than that, I tell them, 'You're doing it all.'

"People do a day's work and then turn up at 6 o'clock and work until 2 in the morning. Children clean garbage. Grandmothers make upholstery."

Participants for the eight episodes were chosen from 1,000 nominees from across the country.

"We basically see what's going on in these communities, and there's a whole other social message," Travis says.

"The story drives it. I don't drive it. They tell a story."