



## Wilbraham native Kelly Overton talks vampires, family and COVID as Syfy series 'Van Helsing' draws to close

Wilbraham native Kelly Overton stars as Vanessa Van Helsing in the Syfy television series "Van Helsing."

By [Ray Kelly | rkelly@repub.com](mailto:rkelly@repub.com)



(Photo by Brendan Meadows/Helsing S1 Productions/Syfy) Brendan Meadows/HELSING S1 PRODUCTIONS/Syfy

Twenty five years ago, the kicking, jumping and throwing Kelly Overton did took place on the athletic fields of Minnechaug Regional High School.

Now, the Wilbraham native beats down vampires as the star of the Syfy television series “Van Helsing.” The horror series begins its fifth and final season on Friday, April 16. (Latecomers can binge watch the first four seasons on Netflix.)

“My passion for sports has definitely translated into many of the roles I’ve played, especially Vanessa (Van Helsing),” Overton told The Republican in a recent interview. “Keeping fit has been a passion and priority for me my whole life. For the role of Vanessa, I specifically focused on weightlifting and boxing to prepare for the show.”

Set in a post-apocalyptic world, Overton plays a descendant of famed Dracula nemesis Abraham Van Helsing. She awakens from a coma to find humanity overrun by vampires. Her unique blood composition gives her the power to turn vampires human, which makes her less-than-popular with the undead crowd.

While the spread of vampirism is the primary threat in the fictional world of “Van Helsing,” the series’ cast and crew in Vancouver, British Columbia, had to turn out the final episodes under the real life threat of COVID-19.

“Everyone was super careful with all the necessary precautions in place: repeated testing of cast and crew, mask wearing, (and) the crew was divided into different groups that stayed separate from each other to minimize a spread if it occurred,” Overton said. “We were one of the first shows to complete a season with no cases!”

She has witnessed her character’s evolution since the first episode aired on July 31, 2016.

“I think Vanessa’s biggest change was her self-discovery” Overton said. “When we first meet her in Season 1, she literally awakens into a new reality, the apocalypse. (During) the rest of the series she is slowly awaking into her new identity, her true self as savior of the world.”

She added, “Vanessa and I are similar in terms of us both being mothers who deeply love their child/children. Vanessa also lets her emotions get the best of her at times and that’s something I admittedly do as well, but in turn we are both committed to evolving. We also both love our Nike shoes.”

Overton is no stranger to the horror genre, having won over sci-fi and fantasy fans with her portrayal of werewolf Rikki Naylor on the popular HBO series “True Blood.” In recent years, she has made regular appearances at San Diego’s famed Comic-Con.

“These fans are die hard! I’ve never seen faithful and interactive fans like this” she said. “We do it for them, they are basically a part of the show.”

TV viewers first encountered Overton when she was cast as homeless teen Rain Wilkins on the daytime soap opera “All My Children” two decades ago. She went on to play Elaine Robinson in “The Graduate” on Broadway opposite Kathleen Turner as Mrs. Robinson.

Since then, Overton has appeared in more than a dozen feature films (“Tekken,” “Collective”) and appeared on two dozen television series (“Beauty and the Beast,” “Legends”).

Overton’s work stretches back to playing Puck in a Minnechaug Regional High School production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” But she gained far more notice in her teen years for excelling in track, basketball and soccer.

After graduating from Minnechaug in 1997, Overton attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City. She was invited back for a second year and at her graduation received the Charles Jehlinger Award, the highest award given to an academy graduate.

The mother of three, Overton is married to fellow actor Judson Pearce Morgan and balances home with work.

\*It can be challenging for sure,” Overton said. “We stick together as a family when I have to travel for long periods of time. We stay close and that helps everyone. But I take breaks from work so I can focus fully on our children.”

Her next project extends beyond acting. Overton will be launching Bodysurf, a new skincare/beach lifestyle brand.

She will leaves “Van Helsing” with more than just the occasional bump or bruise.

“I think what I’ll take away the most is a deep sense of gratitude. Gratitude to have had the opportunity to be a part of an action show for five years and gratitude for the people I met during that time. Gratitude for the two beautiful babies I was blessed to have during those five years and the memories we made as a family in Vancouver.”