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WINNERS ANNOUNCED AT A STAR-STUDED AWARDS CEREMONY

HOSTED VIRTUALLY BY SONY PICTURES & POWERED BY DELL TECHNOLOGIES & STAGEDGE

Winner & Finalist Films are Now Featured on the Site and APP Homepages of IMDb

LOS ANGELES, CA — (August 14, 2020) Last evening, a virtual “orange” carpet was rolled out by Sony Pictures for the [Easterseals Disability Film Challenge: Home Edition](#) Awards Ceremony.

The annual Film Challenge empowers filmmakers, with or without disabilities, to tell unique stories, providing opportunities for inclusion and representation for the world’s largest minority group.

In response to the pandemic, filmmakers were challenged to make a documentary short, all from the safety of their homes. Challenge participants had five days to craft their film, with the flexibility to incorporate previously shot footage in order to tell the story of what disability means to them.

“This is a record-setting year for entries, with steep competition. Each film is poignant and personal ... and so well told, it was difficult for judges to determine our winners,” said Nic Novicki, Actor and Founder of the Easterseals Disability Film Challenge & Easterseals Southern California board member.

“The timing to tell these diverse stories of disability is perfect -- especially where we are, during a global pandemic, with an overwhelming number of people taking to our streets demanding justice, equality, inclusion and an end to systemic racism. And, as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act this year,” Novicki added. “The result: these authentic documentary shorts showcase outstanding creativity in storytelling and introduce us to important, new voices and talent.”

The evening opened with **Jocko Sims** and **Danny J. Gomez** (*New Amsterdam*, NBCUniversal) welcoming guests. **Novicki** served as master of ceremonies, entertaining the virtual audience with his stand-up comedy routine.

Alie B. Gorrie (*Able: a Series*, Amazon) and **Cassidy Huff** (*DreamWorks Spirit Riding Free*, Netflix) introduced a new video showcasing how Easterseals Disability Film Challenge partners across entertainment are portraying disability in storylines, and authentically casting for it, while at the same time, opening doors to meaningful careers in entertainment and media.

Presenters and winners included:

- **Lauren Ash** and **Nicole Lynn Evans** (*Superstore*, NBCUniversal) presented the **WarnerMedia Best Awareness Campaign Award** to **Rachel Handler** for “[How Much Am I Worth?](#)”
- **Nicholas Gonzales** and **David Renaud** (*The Good Doctor*, ABC/Sony Pictures Television) presented the **WarnerMedia Best Editor Award** to **Scott Klumb** for “[Autism Ability](#)”

- **CJ Jones** (*Baby Driver*, and upcoming *Avatar 2*, VIACOMCBS) and **Jillian Mercado** (*The L Word Generation Q*, *Showtime Original Series*/VIACOMCBS) presented the **Adobe/Creativity Partner Best Film Award** to **Jennifer Msumba** for "[The Fish Don't Care When It Rains](#)"

Additional finalists featured during the virtual awards include:

Best Awareness Campaign presented by WarnerMedia

- Regina Saldivar ([Natalie's Point of View](#))
- Patrick Ivison ([In Dependence](#))
- Miriam Revesz ([Voices from the Invisible](#))

Best Editor presented by WarnerMedia

- Nathan Cox ([Hyper Active](#))
- Matthew Placencia ([2nd Act: Danny J.Gomez](#))
- Shawn Lovering ([Expectations](#))

Best Film presented by creativity partner Adobe

- Alexandria Cree ([Aine](#))
- Rachel Handler ([How Much Am I Worth?](#))
- Santa Muha ([Full Picture](#))

Novicki created the Film Challenge in response to under-representation of talent with disabilities in the entertainment industry, giving filmmakers the opportunity to highlight their work and provide them with meaningful exposure. The disability community makes up nearly 25 percent of the U.S. population, but is only seen in less than 3 percent of on-screen roles.

Judges for this year's Film Challenge were: **Col Needham**, IMDb Founder and CEO; **Sheri Linden**, film critic for *The Hollywood Reporter*; filmmakers **Jim Lebrecht** (*Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution*), **Alice Austen** (*Give Me Liberty*), **Kat Coiro** (*Marry Me*) and **Jenni Gold** (*Cinemability*) and **Steve Martini**; actors **Danny Woodburn**, **R.J. Mitte**, and **Mark Povinelli**; comedian **Kevin Jordan**; disability activists **Lawrence Carter-Long** and **Richard Propes**; **Nicole Castro**, HollyShorts Film Festival Managing Director, and **Jenn Wilson**, Film Independent Nominations Manager.

Winners of the Film Challenge will receive a one-hour consulting opportunity with **Gena Desclos**, SVP Post Production HBO, **Tiffany Smith-Anoa'i**, EVP Entertainment Diversity & Inclusion West Coast ViacomCBS, and a diverse team of executives at NBCUniversal. Directors of the 11 winner and finalist films will receive a one-year membership to [IMDbPro](#), the essential resource for entertainment industry professionals, to help them continue achieving success in their careers. Today, a video playlist of the 11 winner and finalist films is featured on the site and app homepages of [IMDb](#), the world's most popular and authoritative source for information on movies, TV shows and celebrities, and on imdb.com/awards-central. After today, each film will continue to be available on its IMDb title page.

Other prizes include the latest in computer technology from Dell Technologies; a \$2,500 production grant provided by NBCUniversal; a Sony Alpha a6000 camera; a full-year subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud; as well as invaluable industry networking and exclusive professional development opportunities.

Sponsors and partners for the 2020 Challenge include: Adobe, Bentonville Film Festival, ViacomCBS Global Inclusion, *Deadline*, Dell Technologies, Dow Jones, Film Independent, HBO, Heartland Film Festival, HollyShorts Film Festival, IMDbPro, Molly & David Pyott Foundation, New Filmmakers LA, SAG-AFTRA, Sony Electronics, Sony Pictures, Sundance Institute, *The Hollywood Reporter*, NBCUniversal, WarnerMedia, and WeScreenplay. Additionally, Dell Technologies and StagEdge Productions provided technical and production support for the virtual event.

ABOUT THE EASTERSEALS DISABILITY FILM CHALLENGE

As someone with a disability, actor, comedian and producer Nic Novicki launched the Disability Film Challenge in 2013 in response to the under-representation of talent with disabilities both in front of and behind the camera. Novicki created the challenge to give aspiring filmmakers the opportunity to showcase their work and provide them with meaningful exposure. In 2017, Novicki joined forces with Easterseals Southern California – the nation’s leading nonprofit supporting people and families with disabilities – to expand the event, now known as the Easterseals Disability Film Challenge. Learn more at www.DisabilityFilmChallenge.com and join the conversation at Facebook.com/DisabilityFilmChallenge.

ABOUT EASTERSEALS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

For more than 100 years, Easterseals has been an indispensable resource for individuals with developmental disabilities or other special needs and their families. The services provided by Easterseals Southern California (ESSC) – in Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Imperial, Kern, San Bernardino, Riverside and Ventura counties – make profound and positive differences in people’s lives every day, helping them address life’s challenges and achieve personal goals so that they can live, learn, work and play in our communities. With 2,800+ employees, 60+ service sites and hundreds of community partnership locations, ESSC assists more than 13,000 people, providing adult/senior day services; autism therapy; child development/early education; employment services, veteran employment support; independent living options; and more. Join us in changing the way the world defines and views disabilities at easterseals.com/southernca.

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