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TOP FILMS AT SI DOCFEST 2009 WIN MORE THAN \$30,000 IN AWARDS Bay Area Nonprofits and High Schools to Share Awards

San Jose, CA; February 9, 2009 – The Second Annual Bay Area Social Issues Documentary Film Contest (SI DocFest) held its screenings and awards ceremony at the Camera 12 Cinemas on Sunday February 8, 2009. In light of the economic situation, the organizing committee decided to increase by almost 30% the awards given out this year. More than \$30,000 provided by sponsor and organizer Do Good Docs Corporation were shared by the top films, the high schools they represented, and their designated nonprofit organizations.

A panel of independent volunteer judges ranked the semifinalist films and their combined scores yielded the winners. These judges were Blanche Araj-Shaheen, TV production professional and host of KTEH's "Video I", a weekly series featuring independent films from the Bay Area; Dr. Félix Gutiérrez, Professor of Journalism and Communication at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication, former Senior Vice President of the Freedom Forum and a Bay Area resident; Michael Whalen, Assistant Professor of Communication at Santa Clara University and independent television and film producer; and Jack NyBlom, co-owner and co-founder of Camera Cinemas, the leading independent theater organization in the South Bay.

First place was awarded to "Stopping the Cycle", a film by Hayley Foster and Rebekah Phillips, which deals with domestic violence. The \$10,000 award will be shared with Presentation High School and Support Network for Battered Women (snbw.org).

Two films tied for second place. Since \$6,000 and \$4,000 awards were designated for second and third place, respectively, the tie resulted in each film being awarded \$5,000 instead.

A second place winner was "BORP", a film by Alex Shebanow that deals with people with physical disabilities actively involved in sports. The \$5,000 award will be shared with Saratoga High School and the Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (borp.org).

The other second place winner was "Jeremy", a film by Margaret Lewis that deals with employment for people with disabilities. The \$5,000 award will be shared with the Freestyle Academy of the Mountain View/Los Altos High Schools and the Jeremy Project at Hope Services (hopeservices.org).

The organizing committee also awarded \$1,500 to San Francisco Mime Troupe (sfmt.org), an organization profiled by fourth place winners Alix Kaufman and Tanner Hanson of Freestyle Academy. Similarly, \$1,000 was awarded to Guide Dogs for the Blind (guidedogs.com), the subject of fifth place winner Amy Schleicher of San Ramon Valley High School. Finally, \$750 was awarded to Sacred Heart Community Service (shcstheheart.org), profiled by Chris Campbell, John Gifford and Wesley Kim of Saratoga High School, winners of sixth place.

In recognition of their outstanding accomplishments, the other seven semi-finalists were awarded \$500 for the nonprofits they represented. Also, \$250 awards were granted to the nonprofits designated by the six Honorable Mention films.

Amy Schleicher won the Outstanding Senior Award and a \$1,500 scholarship, for her extraordinary contributions to the SI DocFest during her high school career. She submitted a total of five films in her two-year participation, earning two finalist awards, one semifinalist award, and two honorable mentions.

A special tribute was presented in honor of Terry McElhatton, formerly of Valley Christian High School, strong supporter of the SI DocFest and last year's winner of the Outstanding Film Instructor award for producing the most films. In his memory, this award will be renamed the Terry McElhatton Memorial Award. The winner this year was Tony Palma of Saratoga High School, and a \$1,500 award will be presented to Saratoga's film program in Tony's honor.

The event was hosted by SI DocFest organizers and co-founders, sisters Monica Alba and Loreli Alba, University of Southern California students and Bay Area residents. Camera Cinemas, the leading independent movie theater company in the South Bay, was an official sponsor and the official host of the SI DocFest.

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*Do **Good Docs Corporation** is a new non-profit organization located in San Jose, California. Its first project is the sponsoring and organizing of the Bay Area Social Issues Documentary Film Contest (SI DocFest). Other projects will be announced in 2009(dogooodocs.com).*

*For over 30 years, the **Camera Cinemas** have presented a wide variety of well-made, intelligent films, from re-released classics to independents, international to mainstream. With four distinct locations, Camera Cinemas has become an important institution in the local film community, making vital contributions to the cultural life of San Jose and representing the best of what the South Bay has to offer (cameracinemas.com).*