

Visions Festival honors top SOC students

BY ADRIENNE FRANK

Though the American Visions Festival is in its 26th year, Larry Kirkman, dean of the School of Communication (SOC), which hosts the student-awards ceremony, called the event new and reenergized.

"That energy comes from all of us, from the mix of SOC students, faculty, and alumni working together. Our vision of a communication laboratory that cuts across the three disciplines is realized in this festival," Kirkman said during the May 5 event.

"It's about honoring the knowledge and the know-how represented in the best student work, setting high expectations for artistic excellence and professional standards, and helping students prepare the strongest portfolios as they go out into the workplace."

Nearly five dozen students were honored during the ceremony, which was expanded this year to include all three divisions of SOC: journalism, public communication, and film and media arts.

A panel of 32 judges, comprising SOC faculty, alumni, and local professionals, sifted through more than 300 entries to determine the winners. The students, whose work included everything from photo essays and motion graphics to in-depth feature stories and screenplays, received cash awards, scholarships, and personal consultations with such successful

SOC alumni as Barry Josephson, who produced *Men in Black*.

The winning films were also screened on MHz Networks, Washington's independent public television station, in early May.

Winners included Alexandra Mayer-Hohdahl, whose "Billionaires for Bush" took second place in the journalism feature category, and whose piece on immigration reform won first place in the in-depth feature competition. Photography student Alex Garcia picked up eight awards,

including a first place nod for her photo of a school bus accident in Alexandria, Va.

The ceremony was emceed by distinguished film producer in residence Chris Palmer, who offered a comical look at his work as an award-winning IMAX producer and wildlife filmmaker.

"When the camera is switched on, it makes a noise like a chainsaw, causing many wildlife species to flee. Often all that we can capture on film is the distant, fleeing rear-ends of frightened creatures."

Michael Cascio '73, senior vice president of production at the National Geographic Channel, also had the audience of several hundred in stitches during his keynote speech.

"They told me the Visions Festival was SOC's version of the Oscars. So, don't forget to thank your parents, teacher, and, depending on your beliefs, God or your agent."

SOC photography professor Leena Jayaswal, right, presented awards to her students, Leah Jamele, left, and Alex Garcia. Garcia won eight awards for her photographs, including a second-place tie with herself in the Photojournalism Features category.



Satomi Kato