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EXCEPTIONAL MINDS

For Immediate Release

Exceptional Minds Open House Draws Entertainment Powerhouses



Marvel Studios' Victoria Alonso, left, "passes the torch" to HBO's Holly Schiffer, who is the third recipient of the Exceptional Minds Ed Asner Award named after the school's most notable founding advisor. Alonso received the 2015 award presented annually for the most "exceptional" industry supporter during the Exceptional Minds Open House.

Sherman Oaks, California – June 6, 2016 – [Exceptional Minds](#) vocational school and working studio for young adults with autism was bursting at the seams with guests Friday afternoon during its fifth annual Open House, where almost 100 professionals from the entertainment industry were introduced to an exceptional group of young visual effects artists and animators.

Production heads, VFX supervisors and executives came from all walks of the industry to meet the young men and women with autism who have worked on productions such as *Game of Thrones*, *Captain America: Civil War*, and *X-Men: Apocalypse* and for major animation programmers such as *Sesame Street*

and *Cartoon Network*. Among them was industry powerhouse Victoria Alonso, EVP of Physical Production for Marvel Studios, who presented Holly Schiffer, another industry powerhouse as VP Post Production/West Coast Production for HBO, with the Exceptional Minds Ed Asner Award.

“It’s not often that we get together like this and just talk about important things...like making a better future, and that’s our commitment to this school [because] opening doors is what we are celebrating today,” said Alonso as she presented Schiffer with the Ed Asner Award on behalf of the staff and artists at Exceptional Minds.

The award is given each year to Exceptional Minds’ most “exceptional” supporters in honor of Ed Asner, who is an autism advocate and the school’s most notable founding advisor. “I am honored to receive this award today, but really I’m the one who should be [honoring you],” said Schiffer, who spoke of the dedication, the quality of work and the professionalism of the Exceptional Minds Studio.

The Exceptional Minds Studio is co-located in the same building as the school and is staffed by graduates of the school’s three-year vocational program to provide them with work experience in rotoscope and cleanup, green screen keying, simple compositing, object removal, tracking mark removal, and end credit composition. Since the studio opened less than two years ago, it has completed visual effects projects for more than 50 productions, including *Game of Thrones*, *The Knick*, *Vinyl*, *Captain America: Civil War* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*.

Schiffer is the third recipient of the Ed Asner Award, following Alonso, who is the 2015 recipient, and Stargate Studios CEO Sam Nicholson, who was presented with the award in 2014 and who also spoke at Friday’s Open House. “I think the happiest guy at Stargate is Kevin,” said Nicholson of Exceptional Minds graduate Kevin Titcher, who has worked at Stargate for the past two years and is now a Junior Composer there. Both Stargate and Marvel have recruited Exceptional Minds graduates to work in their post-production departments.

“The word ‘exceptional’ should be carried with pride, because that is what you do here,” commented Alonso.

In addition to Stargate, Marvel and HBO, Exceptional Minds Studio has worked on projects for 20th Century Fox, Paramount, Universal, Lionsgate, and Pixel Magic, among others.

Exceptional Minds is the only vocational school and working studio to prepare and successfully place young men and women with autism in careers in the fields of animation and visual effects.

Currently, the majority of the nation’s 3.5 million people with autism are unemployed or underemployed, according to government statistics. More than 500,000 U.S. children impacted by autism will enter adulthood during this decade, with one in 68 children to follow.

About Exceptional Minds (<http://www.exceptionalmindsstudio.org>): Exceptional Minds is a non-profit vocational center and working production studio for young adults on the autism spectrum. It was chartered in 2011 to provide the training necessary for creatively gifted individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) who may not otherwise be able to make the transition from high school to

careers. Exceptional Minds offers technical proficiency and work readiness training that prepares students for careers in graphic arts, animation, visual effects, rotoscoping and end title credits. Located in Sherman Oaks, California, Exceptional Minds is both an instructional learning facility and a working studio with hands-on student involvement in production projects, many for the film industry.

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