

LOCAL

Film evokes standing ovation at R2R fest

EMILY WEAVER

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This year's Real-to-Reel film festival kicked off Wednesday night, July 18, at the Joy Performance Center with a standing ovation after the viewing of the profound, heart-wrenching and soul-clenching documentary "Darius Goes West: The Roll of his Life."

For writer and director Logan Smalley, this was not an attempt to break into or make it big in the film industry - this was personal. This journey - a mission. Darius Weems, soon to be a senior at Clark Central High in Athens, GA, suffers from a terminal illness, Duchennes Muscular Dystrophy. Up until this time two years ago, he had never traveled outside of his hometown.

Smalley said that he met Darius about 10 years ago while volunteering at Project REACH, a summer camp for children with disabilities. "I remember Darius would follow his older brother Mario around like a shadow. Mario lost his battle to DMD...in 2000," he said.

Witnessing the daunting threat of Weems' end approaching, Smalley and 11 others, including Weems, embarked on an incredible journey. They went west. In a road trip across the nation, the crew spread awareness of DMD. They tested the wheelchair

accessibility and, at times, inaccessibility of the outside world. Amidst warm hugs, they found the support of actor William H. Macy and his wife, actress Felicity Huffman, who plays "Lynette" on *Desperate Housewives*. Weems played in the ocean for the first time.

Another goal of their mission was to convince MTV's show "Pimp my Ride" to doll up his electric wheelchair that completely broke down during their journey. When they got to Los Angeles, CA, MTV refused to pimp his ride. Disappointed and disheartened, they headed back across the states. But they soon realized the greatest meaning of their journey was not a "tricked-out" wheelchair - it was the journey. Before they all made it back home to Athens, they dropped by East Coast Customs in Atlanta. We look out for our own, said the owner as he presented Weems with the fancy wheels he had dreamed of.

"This wasn't a trip about us. There were 11 second fiddles to our star," Dylan Wilson said. "Our mission was to make this the trip of a lifetime for Darius. I think we succeeded, and somewhere along the way, it became the trip of a lifetime for all of us."

"This is my first documentary," Smalley said. "I actually did not set out to be a filmmaker and don't really consider myself

one." He graduated from UGA in May 2006 with a degree in Special Education.

The documentary also introduces two other families affected by DMD and an "in-depth interview with a medical expert discussing promising new research that offers hope for treatment and possibly even a cure."

According to the website, "By raising awareness of DMD, Darius Goes West also hopes to raise money, and any profits from our film will be funneled directly into DMD research (for a cure)."

Smalley, Weems and three other crew members were present for the viewing Wednesday night and came to the front of the stage for a Q&A session after the film. They were greeted with a standing ovation. Smalley said that a cure may be just around the corner. They are already in the human trial phase of some medication, he added. Weems said that although a cure will probably not be available for him in his lifetime, he wants others to have a better chance.

"Darius Goes West" received a check for \$250, awarded for having the Best Amateur Documentary. Other awards from the film festival, were given to: "My Name is Wallace" - \$1,000 for Best in Show, "Simple Things" - \$300 for Audience Choice, "Off the Grid: Life on the



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Members from the "Darius Goes West" documentary film crew attended the opening night of the Real-to-Reel festival for the viewing of their film. Their documentary was awarded a standing ovation by the audience, a Best Amateur Documentary award and \$250. Star of the show, Darius Weems sits in front. Back row, left to right: Crew members Sam Johnson, Ben Smalley, writer and director Logan Smalley, Violet Arth of the Arts Council, and John Hadden.

Mesa" - \$500 for Best Professional Documentary, "Raccoon and Crawfish" - \$500 for Best Professional Animation, "Fission" - \$250 for Best Amateur Animation, "Warlord" - \$500 for Best Professional Short, "The Little Gorilla" - \$250 for Best Amateur Short, and "Mojave Phone Booth" - \$500 for Best Professional Feature.

KM WEATHER REPORT

By Kenneth Kitzmiller

	July 18-24	Year Ago
Total precipitation	.99	1.55
Maximum 1 day	1.52	3.33
Year to date	21.45	20.82
Low temperature	64 (22nd)	70 (20th, 22nd)
High temperature	94 (19th)	95 (19th)
Avg. temperature	77.6	80.6

HERALD DEADLINES

The Herald welcomes your news for publication in each Thursday's paper. We ask that you observe the following deadlines:

Deadlines for regular news and sports is 5 p.m. Tuesday. In cases of meetings and other activities held on Tuesday night, information will be received until 8 a.m. Wednesday.

Deadline for Lifestyles items is 12 noon Monday. Lifestyles items include weddings, engagements, anniversaries, birthdays, club news, church news and community news.

When holidays or other reasons make it necessary for the paper to publish a day early the deadline is Friday at 12 noon.

There is a \$10 fee for birthdays for ages 0-5. Forms, which must be signed by the parents, are available at the receptionist's desk. Regular advertising rates apply for birthday articles for persons ages 6 and above.

There is a \$20 fee for weddings, anniversaries and engagements. Wedding forms are also available at the receptionist's desk. Only

the information requested on the form will be published. Persons requesting additional information in wedding write-ups must pay regular advertising rates. It is the bride's responsibility - not the Herald's - to obtain permission to publish copyrighted pictures.

Information and articles may be mailed to The Herald, P.O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, NC 28086, brought by the office at 824-1 East King Street, sent by fax to 739-0611 or e-mail to gstewart@kingsmountainherald.com

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