



# News

Directors Guild-Producer Training Plan



*wishing you all the best*

## Graduation - Class of 2007

# A Night to Remember

The Class of 2007 celebrated in style during a terrific graduation dinner Jan. 10 at Delmonico's Lobster House. These 14 dedicated men and women had plenty to cheer about: They each completed 400 days of training, earned membership into the Directors Guild of America (DGA) and received their graduating certificates from DGPTP Board member Ed Milkovich.

*(Continued on next page)*



### Class of 2007

(Left standing) Marie-Helene Riverain,  
Kendall Nichols and Nathaniel Murphy  
(Right standing) Gary Cotti and Robert Morrone  
(L-R seated) Alexis Schmidtberger,  
Nicole Rodgers, Jenna Kehrli,  
Cecilia Mak, Imhotep Coleman,  
Lisa Zugschwerdt, Shanice Anderson,  
Alexis Olsen and Alicia Cho

wishing you all the best

# A Night to Remember

(Continued from front page)

"You each have a great responsibility," Ed told the graduates. "From tomorrow until the day you retire, you are a reflection of all of us and this program. The Board is very proud of each of you."

Also congratulating the graduates were Jon Larson and Cleve Landsberg from the DGA, and Yudi Bennett and BJ Cotton-Jeffords on behalf of the Bob Jeffords Memorial Fund. In addition, Caitlyn Bogert of Entertainment Partners, which sponsored the dinner, presented a gift of scheduling software to each graduate.

DGPTP would like to thank everyone involved in making this a night to remember, especially Entertainment Partners for their ongoing support and sponsorship of this event. We also congratulate the entire Class of 2007 for their tremendous hard work and achievement and we wish each of them a rewarding and successful career!



(L-R) Yudi Bennett, Caitlyn Bogert and BJ Cotton-Jeffords



(L-R) Janet Knutsen, Janet Dyer, Liz Ryan, Ed Milkovich, Cleve Landsberg and Jon Larson

thank you

## Dedicated To DGPTP

The Training Plan would not be where it is today without the dedication and commitment of our Board of Trustees. We'd like to take time out to honor and thank two of our veteran Board members for their more than two decades of ongoing service:

### Alain Silver



Alain Silver was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 1982 and has spent the past 27 plus years contributing his time and extensive knowledge to ensure that the program produces the best and brightest for our industry. His efforts have included taking trainees on many of his productions and teaching training program seminars. He also has served on several of our committees. Thank you, Alain!

### Ricardo Méndez Matta



Since being appointed to the Board of Trustees in 1989, Ricardo Méndez Matta has given generously of his time by mentoring trainees, providing opportunities on productions and serving on multiple committees. His seminars have provided trainees with the skills to excel as assistant directors. Thank you, Ricardo, for your 21 years of service!

# Meet the Class Of 2009

**Please join us in giving a warm welcome to our newest trainees. These eight talented individuals come from diverse backgrounds from all around the globe—and they're already hitting the ground running! Read on for more:**

## *Stephanie Tull* – Troy, Mich.

While working as an office PA on the last season of "The West Wing," Stephanie Tull found herself frequently going to the set to ask the ADs about their job. "They looked like the people in charge and the ones who kept the day flowing," she explains. "I liked the idea of being that person." Stephanie had moved from her native Michigan to Los Angeles with the goal of working in the entertainment industry. Her favorite experience so far: working with Clint Eastwood on "Gran Torino." "It was amazing to watch him in his element," she says. "I was so fortunate to work with some of the best ADs in our industry."

## *Jason Melius* – Chicago, Ill.

A U.S. Marine and computer software product manager, Jason Melius was drawn to the industry by "Jurassic Park." A "strange twist of fate" led him to working as an AD in the indie world, and he realized this was the job for him. "Just working in the industry at this level has been the best experience," Jason says. "Driving to Warner Bros. at zero-dark hundred, I have to convince myself that this is real, and that I'm really going to work as a trainee!"

## *Julia Lennon* – Leicester, England

Julia Lennon began her working life as a fashion photographer, but a serious hand injury prevented her from continuing her career. Instead, she transitioned into the world of travel sales, which brought her to the United States in 2000. But the creative life still called her, and she eventually got a producer's position at a small agency. "The more time I spent on set, the more I realized I needed to work on the live action side," Julia says. She resigned from the agency, begged to PA on any film she could find and applied to the Training Plan. "So many ADs I had only heard about are now sitting two feet away from me, providing valuable information and advice," she adds. "What more could I ask for?"

## *Kasia Trojak* – Warsaw, Poland

After earning her master's in cinema-TV from the USC School of Cinematic Arts in 2008, Kasia Trojak worked as a PA and producer's assistant before starting the Training Plan. "While producing short films in graduate school, I discovered what an assistant director does and was drawn to this profession," she says. "I found it to be one of the most interesting and demanding positions on set." In her first assignment, she immediately found herself working with experienced ADs who gave her valuable advice. "I'm excited to go to work every day," Kasia adds. "Each day brings new experiences and challenges!"

## *Jacki O'Brien* – New York, N.Y.

A theater major at New York University, Jacki O'Brien worked as a stage manager and wardrobe supervisor after college, and then moved into television and film as a costumer. After working in the business for years, she realized that her personality and abilities were best suited to the role of AD. "My best experience so far has been my first day on set as a trainee," she explains. "It confirmed for me that this is what I want to be doing!"

*Hillary Cohen* – Glastonbury, Conn.

Hillary Cohen earned her bachelor's degree in both theater and film from Clark University in Worcester, Mass. Prior to being a trainee, she worked as a talent scout and booking assistant at Nous Model Management. But she found her true calling when she took a summer off to work as a first AD on an independent feature film, "Boyband." "Being an AD is a job that forces me to think on my toes," she explains. "I thrive off the chaos and stress that is production and love being part of the team that is required to find the solutions."

*Daniel Portnoy* – Plainsboro, N.J.

Daniel Portnoy always knew he wanted to work in entertainment, so he moved to California as soon as he earned his degree in communication studies and film media from the University of Rhode Island. Prior to joining the Training Plan, he worked in several TV production offices as a PA, APOC and line producer's assistant. "I want to be the person that puts all the moving parts of a production into place," Daniel explains. "To achieve that, I want to know everything about everything, so I can some day be an effective UPM/line producer. Being an AD will give me invaluable knowledge and experience to help me accomplish my goal."

*Thomas Boucher* – Los Angeles, Calif.

Prior to joining the Training Plan, Thomas Boucher worked as a part-time high school teacher and teacher's aid in Burbank, Calif. "I've always loved two things since I was a kid: movies and a good challenge," he explains. "Assistant directing provides a plethora of challenges that require the ability to bring order to chaos." He didn't have previous industry experience and was ecstatic to be accepted into the program. "I am very fortunate to have these resources available to me," Thomas says. "I have the opportunity now to really train for my future."

*The Class of 2009*

**Back Row (L-R): Jason Melius, Jacki O'Brien, Kasia Trojak and Thomas Boucher**  
**Front Row (L-R): Hillary Cohen, Stephanie Tull, Daniel Portnoy and Julia Lennon**



## New AMPTP President



**T**he Assistant Directors Training Program would like to welcome Carol Lombardini, who was appointed president of the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) in October 2009. Carol has worked for the AMPTP since its formation in 1982, most recently as executive vice president, Legal and Business Affairs, and general counsel.

She also serves as a trustee on the health and pension funds for Directors Guild of America, Motion Picture Industry Pension & Health Plans (MPIHP), Screen Actors Guild (SAG),

Writers Guild of America (WGA) and IATSE National Benefits Fund. She is a trustee on the National Film Preservation Foundation.

We look forward to working with Carol in the months to come!



## Janet Knutsen: Giving Back

**F**or Janet Knutsen, being appointed to the DGPTP Board of Trustees is a great honor—and an opportunity to give back. “The Training Plan opened the doors to the film industry for me,” explains Janet, who works as a producer/production manager. “At the time, I had no connections and was clueless about where and how to start. The program changed my life.”



After graduation, she worked as a second AD on feature films, and then became a first AD on television series. After having two children, she became a UPM and producer while working with David E. Kelley on “The Practice.” During her long career, she’s earned a Humanitas Award and was nominated for Emmy Awards in 2008 and 2009. She’s also earned a Peabody Award and a Television Academy Honors Award for “Shows with a Conscience.”

Janet was elected as an alternate to the DGA/UPM Council in 2006 and as a Council member in 2008. She also serves on the California Film Commission, and in 2009 was asked to join the DGPTP Board.

“I’ve always considered myself a champion of the DGPTP, but in this position I look forward to being more active in the program,” she says. “On the Board, I have a chance to look for those people who need a break like I got and to be there to support trainees. It’s not easy out there, and I hope I can be of value to trainees as someone who’s been there.”

Scottie Gissel

**I** feel incredibly honored to serve as board chair of the very program that brought me to this industry.

Sixteen years ago, I moved from Houston and met the room of incredible people who were my peers in the Training Plan Class of 1994. It’s a testament to the program that so many of my classmates are still thriving in this industry today, and that the relationships between us remain so strong.



The Training Plan seeks to recruit diverse candidates who aspire to the job of assistant director. We then provide those candidates with the network, knowledge and “on the job” training they need to succeed. It’s an incredible opportunity to work in a mentored environment—on shows you’ve only dreamt about! It’s incredibly hard work, too, but the experience is invaluable.

Another mission of the Training Plan is to serve the motion picture and television production industry by providing the best possible candidates for training and service. The goal is symbiotic: Nurture the trainees, and in turn, they nurture the industry.

Whether you are a trainee, an alumnus, advisor or employer, it’s your investment in the program that bears fruit. My aim as board chair is to support the continued success of collaboration fostered by this unique program. I look forward to that service.

**Would you like to receive this newsletter via email?** If you would like to receive future DGPTP newsletters via email, please email us at [mail@trainingplan.org](mailto:mail@trainingplan.org) with a current email address and your full name and/or organization. We are working to build our database to roll out electronic newsletters!



*a reminder to all*

## Lending Trainees A Hand

**M**ichael Schoenbrun, a member of our first graduating class in 1965 and a true pioneer in the industry, was no stranger to the challenges of paying bills and participating in the Training Plan.

The Michael P. Schoenbrun Emergency Loan Fund was created and grants short-term, low interest loans to trainees who need financial assistance while in the program.

Throughout his career as an assistant director, unit production manager and production executive, Michael served as a mentor and advisor for trainees and others seeking to break into production. From 1986 until his death in 1993, he also was a dedicated member of the DGPTP Board of Trustees. Today, the fund is administered by the Motion Picture and Television Fund (MPTF) for the DGPTP.

Contributions to the fund are tax-deductible. To contribute, please make checks payable to the MPTF and mail them to the DGPTP at: 15301 Ventura Blvd., Bldg. E #1075, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403.



*Michael Schoenbrun*

You may contact the ADTP by e-mailing us at [mail@dgptp.com](mailto:mail@dgptp.com), calling us at (818) 386-2545 or writing us at: DGPTP, 15301 Ventura Blvd. Bldg. E #1075 Sherman Oaks, Calif., 91403.

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*in memoriam*

## Nick Counter

**T**he DGPTP would like to express our sincere condolences to the family of **J. Nicholas Counter III**. Nick was a passionate champion of the Assistant Directors Training Program, and he will be dearly missed.



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