Irving Cancer Research Center Marks First Phase

Second-year film student David Pastor-Vallejo won the Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmakers Competition for his 50-second short film, “Movie (Theater) Hero,” which he wrote and directed. Pastor-Vallejo’s film will be shown as part of the pre-feature entertainment on 19,000 movie screens throughout the United States this fall, and he will receive a $10,000 prize.

The competition required entries to be based on the movie-going experience and the characters of “Movie (Theater) Hero” is an overly-dramatic spoof of big Hollywood movies, featuring a ticket-taker, a pretty girl and her date, “the jock,” and an action sequence in which the ticket-taker makes an heroic attempt to save the girl from being squashed with a ketchup-filled hot dog.

What inspired Pastor-Vallejo to write the script for the winning short? “I thought it would be cool if a theater worker became a movie hero himself, for one day,” he says. In the first phase of the competition, Pastor-Vallejo submitted the script, storyboard and a rough budget. From the nearly 200 entries, 10 finalists were chosen, including Pastor-Vallejo and Beatrice Kobow, a third-year Columbia film student. The finalists received a $5,000 shooting budget, and it was off to the Magic Johnson Theater in Harlem for Pastor-Vallejo and producers and classmates Kerry Shields and Jim Pellegrini.

“it was a whirlwind process,” says Shields. “We submitted the script and a couple weeks later found out we were finalists.” The team had only three days, during final exams, to complete pre-production and production. “It was very hard to get it all done,” she says. While finalists had to shoot their film in a Coca-Cola theater, the competition rules did not require a reference to Coke products.

“We didn’t really have a reference to Coke because we didn’t conceive the project as a commercial, but it was the story independently of the fact that this was the Coke competition,” says Pastor-Vallejo. The panel of judges is formed by renowned professionals of the film industry independent from Coca-Cola.

Not only was it a whirlwind process to get the film ready, since Pastor-Vallejo received the phone call notifying him of the selection, it has been a busy couple weeks. First, he went to Atlanta to add a 10-second introduction, presenting the film; then he flew to Sho West in Las Vegas for the theater exhibitor’s major convention, which attracts studios executives, actors, directors and producers. The award was formally announced at a convention ceremony on March 7.

Disbelief“ sums up Pastor- Vallejo’s reaction upon receiving news of his win, “I couldn’t believe it,” he says. “I’ll finally believe it myself when I see it on the big screen.”

The three are all working on their respective scripts for the first- and non-thesis films that are requirements of Columbia’s graduate film program. The $10,000 prize will likely be applied to the cost to produce the film.

“The Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker’s Award gives film students a bridge between the classroom and the world of film-making,” said C. Dianne Jakin, vice president, Entertainment and strategic alliances, The Coca-Cola Company. “Coca-Cola is honored to provide the outlet for unknown film-makers to gain a taste of the business in work in front of influential entertainment executives and the public at large.”

The Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmakers Award is part of Coca-Cola’s annual ShoWest convention. The program helps students gain real-world experience and exposure to launch their careers.

Post-Training-Trauma Offered for Camp-Workers

By Jo Kaileeck

Shortly after the World Trade Center was attacked, Time Magazine speculated that in six months, nearly half of the people who had survived the incident by being in the vicinity were likely to experience a psychiatric disorder. This raised their figure on a 1999 study of survivors of the Oklahoma City bombing.

With this in mind, a three-day training course on post-trauma issues for camp counselors and staff will be offered March 18-20 in the Dodge Room of Earl Hall. Organized by Reverend Susan Field, Columbia’s Baptist chaplain, and co-sponsored by the International Transplantation Institute (ITI) of the University of South Florida, the Crisis Intervention Institute (CII) at Oklahoma City, and Columbia’s Baptist Campus Ministry, the training is open primarily to any individuals working with students and will cover subjects such as the history of clinical and field traumatology, models and responses to trauma and disasters, and compassion fatigue.

Field was concerned that some people who had survived Sept. 11 might not begin to feel the effects until months later, and thought training on campus would be helpful. She recruited Joe Williams, director of CII and Oklahoma Chaplain for the FBI who has been in New York City helping train Port Authority, NYPD and NJPD chaplains. Williams suggested also including instructors from the ITI.

Several mental health professionals have registered for the training as well as representatives from area mental health programs, Barnard College Resi- dential Life, Humanitarian Affairs and Public Affairs, Mailman School of Public Health, School of Social Work, with other chaplains from United Campus Ministries and counselors and chaplains from around the city. More information is available by contacting 854-1514.

 Irving Cancer Research Center Marks First Phase

A traditional “tapping out” ceremony was held recently to mark the completion of the first major phase of construction for the new Irving Cancer Research Center building in Columbia’s Audbon Science and Technology Park. The 13-story, 200,000-square-foot facility is named for New York City philanthropist and food distribution executive, Herbert Irving.

Pictured, from left, are: B. Karen Antman, Antman Professor of Medicine; Karen Antman, Wu Professor of Medicine and director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center; Herbert Pardes, president and CEO of NY Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center; Inspector Herbert Irving; Gerald Fischbach, Executive Vice President of Health Sciences and Dean of the College of Medicine; Florence Irving, and Ruth Fisch- bach, professor of bioethics in the department of psychiatry.

Students Dance 24 Hours Straight For Fight against Pediatric AIDS

By Bernard Goldstein, GS’92

For the second straight year, students involved in the Colum- bia University Dance Marathon (CUDM), raised over $140,000 for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation.

The event is quickly becoming a popular way for students to boost both awareness and resources for the foundation.

There is a purpose behind asking participants to dance until they reach exhaustion. The 24-hour marathon is meant to simul- taneously generate much-needed funds for the foundation.

The marathon was packed with emotional moments as HIV positive children and their par- ents shared stories of survival, triumph, and loss. Friends told the story of Elizabeth Glaser, who decided to do something to address the pediatric AIDS crisis after finding out she had con- tracted AIDS from a blood transfusion and passed it on to her children. In 1988, she and two friends started the organization, which was posthumously named in honor of her. Today the foundation works globally to advance research and improve the quality of life for children with HIV and AIDS.

CUDM has given the Columbia community an event that is fun, unifying and long- lasting,” said CUDM advisor Kyle Pendleton. “Individuals and groups involved with CUDM work for months organizing fundraisers; they attend educa- tional workshops on HIV/AIDS, and even have the opportunity to volunteer with kids. This is all before the actual 24 hours of the dance marathon.”

Last year’s top individual fundraiser was Katie Romansky, CC’03, who raised $8,000. This year she collected more than $6,800, while simultaneously serving as fund raising chair. Romansky has experience with this sort of event, having volun- teered at Camp TLC, a summer camp for HIV positive children run by the Joey DiPalo AIDS Foundation, and at the Incarna- tion Children’s Center, a resi- dence for children with pediatric AIDS in New City.

“Spending time with HIV pos- itive kids, and seeing how the foundation has helped them has really inspired me,” Romansky said. “Many of them would not be here without the work that the Elizabeth Glaser Foundation does.”

The dance marathon provides an opportunity for the entire Columbia community to unite and raise awareness.

“Students, deans and adminis- trators tell me how excited they are for the second year and Hunter, CUDM chair. “I hope people will use their experience with the dance marathon as a spring board for future commu- nity service.”

Plans for next year’s dance marathon have already begun, and the drive for $200,000 will soon begin.

More than $140,000 was raised at Columbia's dance marathon.