

Disney's Dreamers Academy with Steve Harvey and Essence Magazine Gears up at NABJ Conference

Dreamers Share Personal Accounts on Magic behind Annual Enrichment Program

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (August 8, 2011) – The City of Brotherly Love gave a warm welcome to *Disney's Dreamers Academy with Steve Harvey and Essence Magazine* at the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) national convention. The power-packed NABJ event in Philadelphia featured a myriad of panels on professional development, scholastic lectures and workshops. Disney hosted a panel showcasing the magic behind Disney's Dreamers Academy as it embarks on its fifth year of igniting dreams, passions and lives. Eight local Philadelphia-area Dreamers shared their personal stories and provided insight on how Disney's Dreamers Academy has helped them get started on their career exploration.

Stephanie Stewart, a 2008 alumna, spoke on her experience at Disney's Dreamers Academy: "Disney's Dreamers Academy has opened many doors for me. At the program I was able to work directly with a [video] production team. The experience broadened my horizons in production as far as working with cameras and directing, preparing me for my future. I hope to work with Oprah one day."

Leading sports journalist Stephen A. Smith spoke to attendees about the importance of dreaming and on how Disney's Dreamers Academy has inspired him. Top Gospel artist and Disney's Dreamers Academy Advisory Board Member Yolanda Adams wowed guests with a powerful performance. An avid supporter of the program, Adams said, "I share a kindred spirit with the Dreamers because when I was 16 years old, I was looking for role models and I was able to find them in my family. Disney's Dreamers Academy provides youth with great people to look up to. Everyone needs a role model. Hopefully somebody can find that in me."

Since its launch in 2007 by Disney and syndicated-radio-show host/author/comedian Steve Harvey, Disney's Dreamers Academy has shown a world of possibilities to 400 youth. The four-day program held in the world's most creative classroom, Walt Disney World Resort, unites 100 high school students with entertainment experts, motivational speakers and world-class business professionals for a weekend of special events, educational workshops, personal enhancement and professional enrichment. Every year, Dreamers participate in "immersive" workshops concerning career paths ranging from Animation to Zoology, allowing them the opportunity to take a plunge into real-world career scenarios. Each participant learns important interview skills, communication techniques and networking strategies. With a focus on hands-on experience and training, Disney's Dreamers Academy encourages youth to unlock their potential and DREAM BIG.

Among the hundreds of students Disney's Dreamers Academy has helped catapult barriers to their dreams is Niki Dawson. A 2010 alumna, Niki followed her dream to sing and became a sensation on top television show "The Voice." Dawson performed for the audience at the NABJ convention and spoke on her experience with Disney's Dreamers Academy. "The American Idol Experience at Disney's Dreamers Academy gave us a complete feel of the stage," she said. "We were put in the spotlight and learned to work with cameras and media. It was awesome for me to learn how everything worked on stage and behind the scenes. That experience prepared me to get to where I am today."

Disney's Dreamers Academy has evolved into a year-round initiative with its informational Facebook and Twitter social media platforms, interactive website and presence at community outreach partner events like the Essence Music Festival, National Association of Black Journalists Convention and Bud Billiken Parade.

Nominations are open for the 2012 Disney's Dreamers Academy. More information and an online application are available at www.disneysdreamersacademy.com. Students ages 13 to 19, living in the United States and enrolled in high school grades 9-12 when entering can be nominated. Nomination deadline is Oct. 31, 2011.

A distinguished panel of leaders from the communications, education and entertainment industries will judge the nomination submissions. Winners will be announced in early December. Participants and a parent or guardian will travel to Walt Disney World Resort for the 2012 Disney's Dreamers Academy March 8-11, 2012.

There's more information at www.facebook.com/disneysdreamersacademy or follow the program on Twitter at www.twitter.com/dreamersacademy.

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About Walt Disney World Resort / The Walt Disney Co.:

Walt Disney World Resort is a contiguous 40-square-mile, world-class entertainment and recreation center located at Lake Buena Vista, Fla., 20 miles southwest of Orlando. The Walt Disney Co. has a rich legacy of creativity and exceptional storytelling that brings families together in unique and memorable ways. Creative excellence is coupled with a strong commitment to community service and diversity. The Walt Disney Co. is dedicated to making a positive impact in communities around the world, with a primary focus on brightening the lives of children.

About Steve Harvey:

Steve Harvey began doing stand-up comedy in the mid-1980s, which eventually led to a long stint as host of "It's Showtime at the Apollo." His success as a stand-up comedian led to multiple TV sitcoms, including "Me and The Boys", "The Steve Harvey Show" and "Steve Harvey's Big Time Challenge." His first book, "Act Like A Lady, Think Like A Man," quickly became a bestseller in 2009. Harvey has appeared on "The Oprah Show," "Nightline," "Good Morning America" and "The Ellen DeGeneres Show." Currently, Harvey hosts the nationally syndicated "Steve Harvey Morning Show" which airs in over 60 markets and has over 7 million listeners.

About Essence Communications Inc.:

Essence Communications Inc. (ECI) is the number one media and communications company dedicated to African-American women. With a multi-platform presence in publishing, live events, and online, the Essence brand is "Where Black Women Come First". The company's flagship publication, ESSENCE magazine, is the preeminent lifestyle magazine for African-American women, generating brand extensions such as the Essence Music Festival, ESSENCE Black Women in Hollywood, Window on Our Women (WOW I & II) and Smart Beauty I, II & III consumer insights, the Essence Book Club, Essence.com, and ventures in digital media (mobile, television and VOD).