



MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC AMERICA FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 30th ANNIVERSARY, MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH EXCEPTIONAL MINDS

Animation video debuts in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month

WASHINGTON, DC, September 25, 2020 — The Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation kicked off its 30th anniversary by announcing its Make A Difference Day plans, and debuting an animation video produced by [Exceptional Minds](#) – a nonprofit academy and studio for visual effects artists and animators with autism. The announcements were made today to a national audience during the Foundation’s Annual Volunteer Leadership Workshop, which was held virtually this year due to Covid-19.

“The Foundation’s mission is to help youth with disabilities maximize their potential and participation in society,” explained Kevin R. Webb, senior director of the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation. “To achieve this mission, the Foundation provides grant funding to organizations, like Exceptional Minds, that empower youth with disabilities by developing quality education programs that lead to inclusive and competitive employment outcomes. In addition, Mitsubishi Electric employee volunteers get involved by supporting organizations in their own communities,” continued Webb.

To demonstrate its commitment, the Foundation shared plans for a national volunteer fundraising project – a walk/run/roll 5K for Exceptional Minds on [Make A Difference Day, October 24, 2020](#). Mitsubishi Electric employees, family and friends across the country will go 5K, at a safe, social distance, and the Foundation will make a \$10 donation for each participant to support Exceptional Minds based in Los Angeles, California. The Foundation will also match individual employee donations.

“We are immeasurably grateful for this collaboration,” said David Siegel, executive director of Exceptional Minds. “Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation embodies what a true partnership can be. The Foundation’s support has enabled our organization to thrive operationally and has provided our artists on the autism spectrum a remarkable outlet to demonstrate their talent.”

During Friday’s kick-off event, Exceptional Minds debuted [What is Your Superpower?!](#), an animation video commissioned by the Foundation for its 30th anniversary, which featured live video interviews mixed with character animation demonstrating the talent and creativity of artists on the spectrum.

“This film represents more than awesome animation and great storytelling. It is our collaboration with Mitsubishi Electric on full display. It shines a light on how complementary our relationship is and how

seamlessly we have aligned,” added Siegel.

The video was created and animated by graduate artists in Exceptional Minds’ professional studio, where artists have worked on major films such as “Green Book” and “Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker,” and on animated productions, such as Netflix’s “Atypical” and the Sesame Workshop. “The video is truly a work of art,” stated Webb, “as it captures the essence of what the Foundation is trying to achieve with its grant funding. As the U.S. prepares to celebrate the 75th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October, we hope the video will serve as a tool to demonstrate that young people with autism and other disabilities are capable of producing high quality work, and would be valuable additions to the workforce, if they are given access and opportunity.”

As the nation continues to grapple with Covid-19 and high-unemployment, there is also a need to ensure that youth with disabilities are prepared to work in digital careers, and work remotely.

“Due to Covid-19, Exceptional Minds closed its in-person academy in March,” explained Siegel. “Not only did we continue to provide our services to hundreds of students now safely at home and across the whole country, but we graduated our entire class of 2020 in a beautiful remote graduation. And what’s more, we conducted the largest summer program in our history serving more students than ever before – and all of it, remotely.”

Exceptional Minds artists were featured in the animated video, including graduate Matthew De Lorimier, who works for Cartoon Network; and former student Kate Jorgensen, who works at Nickelodeon. Both attended programs at Exceptional Minds designed to graduate them into careers in animation and visual effects.

“Our job at Exceptional Minds is to ensure that more young people, like Kate and Matthew, are given the opportunity to pursue their goals,” said Siegel.

In thanks for the support Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation has given to Exceptional Minds, Siegel presented a cartoon to the Foundation’s president, Mr. Keijiro “Kent” Hora. The cartoon depicts Hora entering a phone booth and changing into a superhero working to make Changes for the Better – Mitsubishi Electric’s corporate motto.

In presenting the award, Siegel stated: “Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation empowers Exceptional Minds, which allows us to empower young people with autism. Thank you for all you do!”

Exceptional Minds is a Los Angeles-based nonprofit training academy and professional digital arts studio that trains artists with autism in the technical and work readiness skills required for meaningful employment in the visual effects, animation and other digital arts fields. Exceptional Minds' goal is empowering people with autism to achieve their full professional potential so that they can lead independent, productive lives. To learn more visit www.exceptional-minds.org.

The Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, based in the Washington, DC area, was established in 1991 by Mitsubishi Electric Corporation and the Mitsubishi Electric U.S. companies, which produce, sell and distribute a wide range of consumer, industrial, commercial and professional electronics products. The Foundation has contributed more than \$17 million to organizations that are empowering young people with disabilities to lead more inclusive and productive lives. To learn more, visit www.MEAF.org.

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