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For Immediate Release

**Warner Bros Presents Check to Exceptional Minds!**  
*The vocational school is breaking down employment barriers for young adults  
on the autism spectrum.*



**Sherman Oaks, California – November 10, 2016** – Mary-Elizabeth Michaels, Director of Community Affairs for Warner Bros, presented Exceptional Minds' Ernie Merlán with a check yesterday to help fund growing demand for the nonprofit's career training and job placement programs for young people with autism. Also with the team was Gina Cavalier who helped form the new TECH@WB employee group that chose Exceptional Minds as its charitable organization of choice. The donation is just one more way that Warner Bros is partnering with Exceptional Minds to "Change Lives One Frame at a Time!"

[Exceptional Minds](#) is the only vocational school and working studio preparing young adults with autism for meaningful careers in animation and visual effects. Started in 2011, it has recently received national recognition for its innovative approach to job development that is now overcoming employment barriers for those on the spectrum. Graduates of the vocational school have gone on to careers with Marvel and have worked on visual effects for high-profile productions such as *Captain America: Civil War*, *Ant-Man*, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, *Game of Thrones*, *Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2* and the current blockbuster *Doctor Strange*. Exceptional Minds' visual artists have also created original animation for Cartoon Network's anti-bullying initiative ([Stop Bullying Speak Up!](#)) as well as Sesame Street's autism initiative, [Sesame Street and Autism: See Amazing in All Children](#).

The majority of the nation's 3.5 million people with autism are unemployed or underemployed at an estimated lifetime care cost of \$3.2 million. Each year, 50,000 children with autism in the U.S. will turn eighteen and require adult services if they are not employed. Exceptional Minds provides customized education in the digital arts to over 225 children, teens and young adults and provides ongoing job placement and coaching for 25 graduates. Currently, for every three families wanting their young adults to attend the vocational academy, only one can be accepted. "Lack of capacity due to funding is a reality, which is why donations like this are so important. We welcome any and all support to help us put these capable, talented individuals to work," says Merlán.

**About Exceptional Minds (<http://www.exceptionalmindsstudio.org>):** Exceptional Minds is a non-profit vocational center and working production studio for young adults on the autism spectrum. It was chartered in 2011 to provide the training necessary for creatively-gifted individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) who may not otherwise be able to make the transition from high school to careers. Exceptional Minds offers technical proficiency and work readiness training that prepares students for careers in graphic arts, animation, web design, visual effects and rotoscoping. Located in Sherman Oaks, California, Exceptional Minds is both an instructional learning facility and a working studio with hands-on student involvement in production projects, many for the film industry.

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