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EXCEPTIONAL MINDS

For Immediate Release

Exceptional Minds Steals the Show at Autism Conference



Exceptional Minds students, left to right, Lloyd Hackl, Patrick Brady, Eli Katz and Ari Guthrie along with instructor Josh Dagg, standing, talk about their experiences working on Oscar-nominated film *American Hustle* during the Profectum conference attended by 300 childhood development professionals Friday.

Sherman Oaks, Calif. – March 24, 2014 -- Autism, so often viewed as just a number in a study, seemed to grow a body and walk into Friday's Profectum conference in Pasadena when three young men and one young woman took to the stage to talk about their goals and their successes in the movie post-production industry.

Patrick Brady, Ari Guthrie, Lloyd Hackl and Eli Katz – all in their 20s and on the spectrum – are students at [Exceptional Minds](#) digital arts academy for young adults with [autism](#), which has received international acclaim of recent for their visual effects work on Oscar-nominated film *American Hustle*.

Confident, engaging, and at times humorous, the four [answered questions](#) during the autism conference about their experiences with what has become a model for others like them hoping to beat the

statistical odds. Roughly 90% of individuals with autism are underemployed or unemployed, a number that Exceptional Minds expects to change by preparing its students for careers in the digital arts.

Technical as well as social aspects of the workplace are part of the school's vocational training. "I didn't know how to work in a group setting until Exceptional Minds," commented Lloyd, who graduates the school's three-year program in June along with the other three.

For the 300 or so childhood developmental professionals at the Pasadena Convention Center attending the Profectum conference Friday, Patrick, Ari, Lloyd and Eli represent a culmination of their life's work in developmental disorders and autism in particular. For them, and the parents of children with autism also attending the conference, Exceptional Minds represents hope – and a future.

"(These students are) showing us that expectations really need to be raised by all of us and we need to find more ways to create opportunities," said Serena Wieder, Ph.D., a psychologist and the Clinical Director of Profectum, a professional organization devoted to educating parents and advancing special

needs research and developmental models. Its second international conference held in Pasadena March 21 – 23 brought professionals and parents from all over to attend “Awakening Potential Through Brain Science.”

During the conference, Exceptional Minds students showed a [video](#) of their work on films *Lawless*, *Haunt* and *American Hustle*, which involved rotoscoping and detailed pre-comp techniques. When asked about the complexity of the work, Ari replied: “It can be challenging as well as extremely, extremely time consuming. I am super grateful for the opportunity... I just didn’t think it was something that was possible until I started doing this.”

“It was step by step of learning new things, and getting a little better in steps,” agreed Patrick.

The four received movie credit for their work on *American Hustle*. Eli admitted to the conference goers that he went to the theater to see the movie so he could see his name on the big screen. “I did. I did go see it for the credits, and my name was up there!” he said, to a chorus of laughter.

The crowd also laughed during an animated video created by the students specifically for the conference entitled [Convention Etiquette](#) featuring a character by the name of Objectionable, who, unlike his friend Exceptional, talks loudly, interrupts the speaker, and has questionable hygiene.

The conference was the second Profectum conference attended by Exceptional Minds students. As the four exited the stage with their instructor, Josh Dagg, Dr. Wieder turned to them and said, “You are really an exceptional group and we hope to continue to learn from all that you do so we can help so many other people.”

Exceptional Minds was started in 2011 by parents and professionals in the movie industry to help young adults with autism transition from high school into meaningful careers in the digital arts. The school is unique in that it prepares students with autism for careers through professional accreditation and real work experience in the digital arts industries.

Third-year students Patrick, Ari, Lloyd and Eli will be part of the school’s first graduating class in June, having received professional training and certification when applicable on the software applications considered to be the gold standard in post-production. Just as important, they have already received several major motion picture credits to their name, which will be helpful in landing a job or contract work through the Exceptional Minds Studio (EMS) opened recently for this purpose.

About EMS and 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. 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. Operating separately and independently, the Exceptional Minds Studio (EMS) provides contract services in web design, animation, rotoscoping and visual effects cleanup on an as-needed basis.

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