

NEWS RELEASE

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AREA FATHER USES WORDS & PICTURES TO FIGHT NEGATIVITY IN NEW TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY

KANSAS CITY – Three steps forward, one giant step back. That’s how one Kansas City father describes the harm caused by Hollywood’s recent use of the word “retarded.” Now, he’s using his own movie to fight back.

Local producer Girard Sagmiller, who is the father of a young son with Down Syndrome, has produced a new documentary, “Dakota’s Pride”, and will be seen on public television stations, nationwide, beginning in October 2008. The film, which chronicles Sagmiller’s search for answers about his son’s journey, provides an upbeat look at living with and loving an individual with an intellectual disability.

“Because of the current Hollywood movie environment, and their repeated, improper use of the word ‘retarded,’ I think it’s time to re-educate our nation about the accepting ALL people,” says Sagmiller. “In this election year, we talk about prejudice and acceptance of different colors and creeds. Well, the same goes for the special needs community.”

Sagmiller, who spent several years filming and producing Dakota’s Pride, has teamed up with KTWU; the public television station located in Topeka, KS, licensed by Washburn University; to air and present the film to public television stations nationwide. KTWU premiered the documentary in August 2008, with positive results. Sagmiller hopes for the same type of response, as the piece airs around the country and hopes it will begin to counter the negative effects of such Hollywood movies as Tropic Thunder and other film and television programming.

“I can’t turn on a comedy show and not hear the ‘r’ word. I don’t believe great comedians need to degrade someone to be funny,” he says. “With my personal insight, I hope to reach out to others and encourage support of all of our difficulties.”

Dakota’s Pride was produced through Sagmiller’s non-profit organization, The Gifted Learning Project. The documentary has already received acclaim from the Universal Film Festival, and is recommended by The Dove Foundation, a nonprofit organization encouraging the creation, production, and distribution of family entertainment.

For more information about Dakota’s Pride, visit The Gifted Learning Project website, www.theglp.org.

For more information on when Dakota’s Pride will air on KTWU, visit ktwu.washburn.edu or go to the website of your local public television station to find out if Dakota’s Pride is airing in your area.

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