



2018 Media Access Awards Honors Media & Entertainment Trailblazers Advancing Disability Awareness & Inclusion

*AGT Finalist & Comedian Drew Lynch & Actor Logan Browning to Co-Host
Nov. 1st Ceremony, the Ultimate Annual Celebration of Diversity & Disability Inclusion*

LOS ANGELES – Oct. 22, 2018 – Easterseals will present this year’s **Media Access Awards** for the first time as the event moves its gala breakfast Nov. 1 to The Beverly Hills Hotel. The awards broaden the definition of inclusion and this year’s event marks the beginning of a new era for the annual ceremony, which pays tribute to entertainment industry professionals who tirelessly advance public awareness, inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities, as well as call out for positive and accurate depictions of characters with disabilities in film and television.

This year also marks the launch of a long-term alliance and partnership with **Easterseals Southern California** (ESSC). For nearly 100 years, Easterseals has been an indispensable resource for individuals with developmental disabilities or other special needs and their families.

Co-hosting the awards are comedian **Drew Lynch**, who first gained national attention on *America’s Got Talent* when he received the coveted “Golden Buzzer” from Howie Mandell, advancing him directly to the live finals, taking second place; and **Logan Browning**, currently starring in the groundbreaking and thought-provoking Netflix series *Dear White People*.

2018 PRESENTERS: Producer **Jonathan Murray** and the cast of *Born This Way*, Academy Award-winner **Marlee Matlin** (*Quantico*, *The Magicians*), **Robert David Hall** (*CSI*, *The Practice*), **Millicent Simmonds** (*A Quiet Place*, *Wonderstruck*), **Dave Annable** (*666 Park Avenue*, *Brothers & Sisters*) **Odette Annable** (*Supergirl*, *The Astronaut Wives Club*, *The Double*) and **Nic Novicki** (*Loudermilk*, *Boardwalk Empire*, *Gotham Comedy Live*), with a special introduction from late-night superstar **Jimmy Kimmel**.

WHAT: Media Access Awards

WHEN: Thurs., Nov. 1, 9-11:30 a.m.

WHERE: The Beverly Hills Hotel, 9641 Sunset Blvd.,
Beverly Hills, Calif.

Commented Writer/producer and co-chair of the Media Access Awards, **Deborah Calla**: “With the Media Access Awards, we are showcasing and inspiring the world on the potential of this very vibrant community. Our partnership with Easterseals allows us to grow our mission and ability to position ourselves to be a referral and advocacy organization for the community and for the industry at large. Moving to this new venue to accommodate more guests and supporters is part of that.”

Said **Mark Whitley**, CEO of ESSC, “We are excited about the opportunity to partner with the Media Access Awards to further a dialog about inclusion and diversity in entertainment, which provides a platform from which we can uniquely influence and change the way we all think about disability and look forward to collaborating in 2018 and beyond.”

Adds event co-chair, writer-producer **Allen Rucker**, “In the era of greater inclusion, people with disabilities, the largest minority in the country, are being left out of the conversation. The Media Access Awards aim to change that by calling attention to the disability experience. We applaud our 2018 winners such as *This Close* and *A*

Quiet Place, as they show people as more than their disability. These writers, producers, actors, casting directors and directors are at the forefront of change.”

AWARDS TO BE PRESENTED:

- **CASTING SOCIETY OF AMERICA AWARD:** **Sasha Alpert** (*They Call Us Monsters*, *Autism: The Musical*) and **Megan Sleeper** (*Undressed*, *Born This Way*).
- **PRODUCERS GUILD OF AMERICA GEORGE SUNGA AWARD:** Director **Andrew Ahn** (*Mud*, *Spa Night*), producer **Mary Pat Bentel** (*Behold My Heart*, *Seed*), producer **David Hinojosa** (*Goat*, *Lemon*), actress **Soshannah Stern** (*The Hammer*, *Jericho*, *This Close*, *Supernatural*), producer **Christine Vachon** (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *Boys Don't Cry*, *Far From Heaven*), writer **Paul Young** and actor **Joshua Feldman** (*This Close*).
- **MEDIA ACCESS AWARDS NORMAN LEAR - GERI JEWELL LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:** **Gail Williamson**, KMR Talent, the only agent in the country with a specialty of representing actors with disabilities, including such clients as Jamie Brewer (*American Horror Story*) and Gavin McHugh (*911*).
- **MEDIA ACCESS AWARDS VISIONARY AWARD:** Composer, writer-producer and television personality **Simon Cowell** (*American Idol*, *Americas Got Talent*).
- **SAG-AFTRA HAROLD RUSSELL AWARD:** Actor **CJ Jones** (*Baby Driver*).
- **SAG-AFTRA DISABILITY AWARENESS AWARD:** Casting Society of America (CSA)'s **Inclusion & Diversity Committee**.
- **WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA WEST EVAN SOMERS MEMORIAL AWARD:** Writer-producer-directors **Bryan Woods & Scott Beck** (*A Quiet Place*) and actor **John Krasinski** (*A Quiet Place*, *Jack Ryan*, *The Office*).

2018 SPONSORS: The Media Access Awards is presented Easterseals Southern California. Additional support is provided by the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA), Friends of Californians with Disabilities; Producers Guild of America (PGA); Writers Guild of America West (WGAW); Casting Society of America (CSA); Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation; Bunin/Murray; CBS Entertainment Diversity & Inclusion; RespectAbility; STARZ, a Lionsgate Company; NBC-Universal; Disney ABC Television Group; Michele Spitz; Woman of Her Word; *Variety*; City National Bank; American Business Bank; and Kevin Bright.

About the Media Access Awards:

An estimated 61 million Americans live with disabilities. In recognition of this reality, the Media Access Awards was created in 1979 by the California Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities in conjunction with producer Fern Field and her late husband, Norman Brooks. Its goal remains enabling entertainment unions and guilds to recognize the social impact of films, television, and broadcasting emphasizing diversity and inclusion.

The awards simultaneously strive for an open dialogue regarding portrayals of disability and increased employment opportunities in front of and behind the scenes, as well as recognize and encourage the accurate portrayal of people with disabilities. To that end, the Media Access Awards celebrates producers, actors, writers, broadcasters, and casting directors who have made positive contributions to the more accurate and inclusive portrayals of persons with disabilities in film, television, and all other media. They are truly pioneers in affecting change.

About Easterseals Southern California:

For nearly 100 years, Easterseals has been an indispensable resource for individuals with developmental disabilities or other special needs and their families. The services provided by Easterseals Southern California (ESSC) – in Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Imperial, Kern, San Bernardino, Riverside and Ventura counties – make profound and positive differences in people's lives every day, helping them address life's challenges and

achieve personal goals so that they can live, learn, work and play in our communities. With 2,700 employees, 60+ service sites and hundreds of community partnership locations, ESSC assists more than 10,000 people, providing adult/senior day services; autism therapy; child development/early education; employment services, veteran employment support; independent living options; and more. At Easterseals, 88% of our income is spent on services. Join us in changing the way the world defines and views disabilities.

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