



Senior-produced programs win TV awards

By Rebecca Villaneda, Peninsula News  
Monday, February 4, 2008 1:21 PM PST

Since they began filming their programs last February, Peninsula Seniors husband-and-wife team Jarel and Betty Wheaton have completed 29 shows on topics ranging from World War II spy Marthe Cohn to Trump National's Concours d'Elegance.

Last week their work, which is regularly seen on Rancho Palos Verdes Channel 33, earned two awards plus an honorable mention at the 16th annual Torrance Community Television Awards. The prize-winning programs were "Marthe Cohn — Behind Enemy Lines" and "Dave's Garage (Dave Parker's private car collection)." Their documentary on "Fireboat No. 2" received honorable mention.

"It's really about the people we are filming — that's what's so great about doing these programs," Jarel said. "We are meeting these great people and hearing their interesting stories, and having a ball doing it."

Last year the Wheatons approached Peninsula Seniors President Ken Dyda about wanting to do more with the Seniors' weekly lecture series, which is organized by Marty Dodell and Bill Ritchie. The couple wanted to get more from lecturers and visit them at home or their office to "liven it up," said Betty.

Donations from Peninsula Seniors allowed Dyda to purchase professional equipment, and the three put their heads together to come up with the format audiences can see today.

"We took a different approach — we introduce the subject and let them tell the things that they want to talk about, and that gets them enthused because they don't feel constrained and their excitement and enthusiasm comes through," Dyda said. "It makes it personal, like you're sitting in their living room and they're telling you about this."

With the success of their programs, the Wheatons enrolled in studio and field production courses. They began filming events and subjects they thought would be of interest to mainly seniors, but the couple also wanted to reach a wider audience.

With the Out & About Series they have done just that, and their programs have been shown in 13 cities on 15 stations, as well as in museums and hospitals. The Wheatons highlighted a B-17 demonstration at Torrance Airport, the Santa Fe 3751 Historic Locomotive and the Western Museum of Flight grand opening.

"Most of our programs focus on some kind of nonprofit that's building the community," Jarel said. "The program helps get the word out about an activity that they are doing ... It generates interest; it may increase attendance and benefit their charities."

Added Dyda, "Our whole function is to take what we produce and distribute it as far and wide as we can in the South Bay."

The programs are copyrighted, but the subjects are given permission to show them as a service to the community.

Last Christmas the Wheatons put together "Sleepy Hollow Christmas Lights," which was shown at a children's hospital this April. They also were offered a ride on the Good Year blimp.

For the latter the couple plans to focus on the history of the blimp by interviewing pilots and the maintenance crew. "So it's very much an educational thing," Jarel said.

For Betty it's impossible to pick out a favorite program.

"Each one has its special feature ... They all come together so uniquely," she said. "I like to bring out the people ..."

To me the films are about them.”

With six nominations, the Wheatons took home more awards than any other producers, according to Dyda.

Judges varied from a Santa Monica CityTV station manager to a Time Warner Cable division manager.

“It’s not a local thing — in my view it’s a real competition. We’re quite proud of what Betty and Jarel have accomplished in a short time,” Dyda said. “You can tell they are having a good time, and what better way to do something as a volunteer that’s good for the community that you enjoy yourself.”

Watch the award-winning programs and any Peninsula Seniors-produced program online at [www.pvseniors.org](http://www.pvseniors.org).



Rancho Palos Verdes’ Channel 33 acting general manager Mark Doddy (center) poses with Peninsula Seniors volunteers and award recipients Jarel and Betty Wheaton. The Wheatons won two awards and one honorable mention for their programs at the Torrance Community Television Awards on Jan. 25.