

# Women in Film and Video of Maryland

www.wifvmd.org ~ 410-685-FILM

December/January 2009

## Letter from the President



Dear Members:

2008 was an excellent year! It is now time to learn from the old and ring in the New Year with exciting new initiatives at WIFV-MD. We hope to grow more this year and continue to meet the needs of our members through more workshops and skill development seminars and by promoting them through our new WIFV-MD directory which will be coming online soon. We also hope to create better networking opportunities with great speakers and panelist. Last year we ended with some great panelist such as Sareva Racher and Mike Lemon from Mike Lemon Casting. This was a packed meeting and the members were very happy with all the information that was provided by our guest speakers. So

Donald Thoms, President of CINE awards, electrified our members with his eloquent words of experience on the world of Discovery Communications. We truly enjoyed his enthusiastic passion for the industry. We were also intrigued and excited about the great work he is doing with the CINE awards. The meeting was exciting and exhilarating with so much information from Lois Tuttle, of the Baltimore Women's Film Festival, and Rosemarie Levy from IATSE, who is also on the committee for the recently established Film Coalition.

Women In Film and Video would like to take the time to thank a few members for always assisting us when we need them. They are: Roberta Lyles, Warren Watson, Jack Gerbes, Kathi Ash, Michelle Ferrel, Barbara Herron, Craig Herron, Twila Ilgenfritz, Lois Seeley, Gayle Economos, Whitney Hahn, Ruth Brinkman, Paul Sulsky, Gigi Barnett, Linda Fausnet, Steve Wallace, Gregg Landry, Carol Appleby, Jacquie Greff, Kenneth Fletcher, Joel Thomas, Charles Brice, Sareva Racher, Hugh Staples, Brian Naughton, Kurt Klaus, Rosemarie Levy, Kami Locklear, Betsy Royal, Aaron Marcus and Virginia Ryker.

Whether you helped tidy-up after a meeting, helped out at the Screen Scene Conference, decorated at the holiday party, or checked people in at our Maryland Film Festival reception, we want to say thank you for all you have done over the past years. We truly appreciate all our members, but these members have been tremendously helpful. We hope that in the coming years we will have the cooperation and assistance of all our members for events, meetings, conferences and film festival events. It is because of you that we have been a success. We hope to pull together and work hard in this New Year and achieve greater things. If you have any questions regarding future meetings, please go to [www.wifvmd.org](http://www.wifvmd.org) or contact Arlette Thomas-Fletcher at [president@wifvmd.org](mailto:president@wifvmd.org). Hope to see you at the February 12, 2009 meeting at Renegade Studios 10950 Gilroy Road, Suite J, Hunt Valley, MD 21031!

Sincerely,

Arlette Thomas-Fletcher  
WIFV-MD, President

# REFLECTIONS OF PAST NETWORKING MEETINGS

## December Member Meeting Wrap-up

Though the weather outside was frightful... the December member meeting of WIFV-MD, was a cheery holiday event held at WJZ-TV. Because it was lightly attended, it was a nice opportunity for new members to speak one-on-one with more established members. Following the networking period, the meeting featured a reprise showing of Zoe Cassavettes' **Broken English**.

## January Member Meeting Wrap-up

What do you get when you cross a video industry executive with a proud parent? In the case of WIFV-MD's January meeting you get an entertaining and informative evening with Donald Thoms. At the meeting, held at WJZ-TV, Thoms generously shared his background, knowledge and wisdom with WIFV members and their guests, speaking for nearly an hour and then fielding questions for almost another hour.

Thoms is the current President of Cine, whose mission is "to serve emerging and established film, video, and new media professional as their primary career-advancing peer group." It is Cine which gives out the Golden Eagles awards for excellence in the production of film, television, video and new media.

Thoms started his career as a Floor Director at a local Baltimore station while in college, thinking that he would become a "voice" (literally) in the industry. However, his career path took him elsewhere – to Maryland Public Television where, during his twenty years tenure, he rose to the position of Director Regional Productions and received numerous awards including the Cine Golden Eagle and several regional EMMYs.

Next came the launch of Discovery Health Channel where Thoms entered as Vice President of Program Production in charge of the day-to-day operations of television production. During his six plus years with Discovery Health Channel he was overseeing over 20 different production teams in various parts of the world, and was responsible for the development of shows like **John&Kate, plus 8; National Body Challenge; Dr. G: Medical Examiner;** and **Birthday live!** In 2007, as ownership of Discovery Health Channel was shifting, Thoms decided to try a new roll with Discovery Communications – Vice President of Talent Development and Diversity. In this roll, Thoms has found and secured on air talent for the multiple networks of Discovery Communications; has worked with the networks to help develop short and long term goals for on air talent and developed the first extensive minority-casting list for the networks, which includes scientists, anthropologists, doctors, chefs, designers, actors, adventurers, engineers, and explorers; and developed successful and ongoing relationships with major colleges and universities round the country to establish lines of communications for emerging talent.

Today, though Thoms is not literally a "voice" in the industry, his voice and accomplishments for independent film makers and minorities echo across the industry. His legacy however, goes beyond his personal achievements – he is also the proud father of actress Tracie Thoms. Donald Thoms' advice to anyone who wants to pitch an idea for a program is common sense - know who you are talking to. "Don't try to pitch a story that has nothing to do with animals to Animal Plant." Thoms advises producers, writers and developers to learn about the various networks/channels and develop relationships with the people who work there. Thoms stated that the goal should be to move to the next step in the process and develop a working relationship with the network or production company. The current idea might not work out, but once they know you, you are much more likely to be taken seriously for other projects.

## 2008-2010 WIFV MD Board Members

**President:** Arlette Thomas-Fletcher ([president@wifvmd.org](mailto:president@wifvmd.org))

**Vice President:** Gigi Barnett ([vp@wifvmd.org](mailto:vp@wifvmd.org))

**Treasurer :** Open ([treasurer@wifvmd.org](mailto:treasurer@wifvmd.org))

**Secretary:** Brian Naughton ([secretary@wifvmd.org](mailto:secretary@wifvmd.org))

**Board Member:** Kenneth Fletcher ([honoraryboard@wifvmd.org](mailto:honoraryboard@wifvmd.org))

**Membership Director:** Open ([membership@wifvmd.org](mailto:membership@wifvmd.org)) **Newsletter**

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**Publicity Director:** Trudy Perkins ([publicity@wifvmd.org](mailto:publicity@wifvmd.org))

**Volunteer Opportunities Director:** ([volunteer@wifvmd.org](mailto:volunteer@wifvmd.org))

**Communications Director:** Open ([communications@wifvmd.org](mailto:communications@wifvmd.org))

**Web mistress:** Whitney Hahn ([webmaster@wifvmd.org](mailto:webmaster@wifvmd.org))

Gayle Economos

Jack Gerbes

Kurt Klaus, esq.

Bonnie McCausey

Betsy Royall

## January Member Meeting Wrap-up (continued)

If fortunate enough to get a face-to-face with the people in power at the network/channel/production company, make sure you have your 2-3 minute summary well prepared. In addition to a brief synopsis of the program, be able to explain how your show will fit into the channel's line up and why. If your show is a half hour piece be sure to explain what would follow it in an hour slot. In most cases it is not necessary to shoot/rapid edit segments for the initial meeting. If the production company/channel likes your idea, they may ask for this as a next step, and if they really like it, they will shoot the pilot at their expense. If not, you will probably have wasted your own time and money. Thoms also added that if the network shows an interest, make sure you follow up in a reasonable amount of time. If you don't, you risk that the ideas that you are developing may become obsolete with regard to the network's new line ups, again making all your work for naught.

Suppose you already have a finished show – fully shot, completely edited – in those cases you should approach the acquisition department of the network or channel. Unfortunately, if a product is finished and the network/channel has no editorial input into the piece, they will usually pay less for the show because they will only be buying a license for airing the piece.

When producing an hour documentary piece for commercial television – like Discovery Networks, Thoms advised that the piece should be written and edited in the equivalent of six acts, with hooks (but not necessarily cliff hangers) at the end of each act. This is to facilitate easy cutting for commercial breaks and to keep viewers interested enough to come back after the commercial break.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Rosemarie Levy** would like to advise members about the **MD Film Coalition** ([www.mdfilm.org](http://www.mdfilm.org)). It is a group of like-minded organizations which have come together to help the Maryland film industry recover. In recent years, MD has lost a number of films to other states because of incentives. The Mission of the Maryland Film Industry Coalition is “to advocate for effective incentives that will enable Maryland to regain and enhance its competitiveness as a premier location for film, television and media production.” Please get involved and help bring the film industry back to MD.

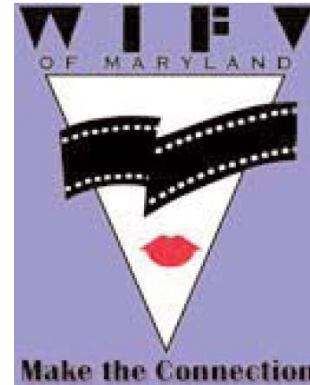
**Lois Tuttle**, Event Coordinator for the Baltimore Women's Film Festival ([www.bwfilmfestival.com](http://www.bwfilmfestival.com)), is seeking volunteers and submissions for the October 2009 event. “The Baltimore Women's Film Festival is dedicated and focused on seeking out and promoting cinema created by and for women. This non-profit festival is held during breast cancer awareness month. 50% of all ticket sale proceeds are donated to breast cancer research and the outreach/survivorship program for Johns Hopkins breast cancer patients...Festival competitive categories include Documentary, Feature Film, Short Comedy, Short Drama, Music Videos, Experimental Films and Animated Films. Questions? Email [getinvolved@bwfilmfestival.com](mailto:getinvolved@bwfilmfestival.com) or [lois@bwfilmfestival.com](mailto:lois@bwfilmfestival.com).

**The final deadline** for the Fourth Annual Baltimore Screenwriters Competition has been **EXTENDED to Friday, January 30, 2009**. Applications are being accepted **with a \$50** application fee. The competition is designed to create awareness of the screenplay as a literary art form and to encourage new screenwriters into the entertainment industry. The competition is accepting applications and original feature length screenplays that can be filmed in Baltimore. Entry form, rule and release form are available for download at [www.baltimorefilm.com/index.cfm?page=screenwriting\\_competition](http://www.baltimorefilm.com/index.cfm?page=screenwriting_competition). Materials can be mailed or delivered to the Baltimore Screenwriters Competition, Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts, 7 East Redwood Street, Suite 500, Baltimore, Maryland 21202.

## MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

### Arlette Thomas-Fletcher

**Arlette Thomas-Fletcher** won the Peer Bronze Award at the TIVA Peer Awards on November 22, 2008, in the area of fiction shorts for scriptwriting for her short film “Assault In Brooklyn.” She is currently working on a new short film called “The Mystery Date” which should be screening at a venue soon. If you would like more information about her latest projects go to [www.fruitsofthespiritproductions.com](http://www.fruitsofthespiritproductions.com).



### Michelle Farrell

**Michelle Farrell's** feature-length documentary “Unraveling Michelle” won a Peer Bronze Award at TIVA Peer Awards on November 22, 2008 for documentaries above thirty minute category. If you are interested in more information about the Peer Award please go to <http://tivadc.org/content/blogsection/17/77/>. She also just finished shooting a feature-length film called Smaltimore. To learn about Michelle's work and services please go to <http://www.absoluteindependentpictures.com/>

### Craig Herron

**Craig Herron** is currently working on a short animation film project called “The House of Usher.” If you would like to know more information about this project go to <http://web.mac.com/herrondesigns/herrondesigns/Home.html>

### Jerry Gietka New Radio Show

I will be beginning a new radio show (also on local Arts & entertainment like the previous one on WCBM) the end of February on WNAV Annapolis. I hope to include new artists and some skits on this one as well as interview, talk format. Looking for prospective writers (songs, skits, plays, screenplays etc), primarily for original material (10 minute at most skits). If anyone is interested, reply to [jerrygietka@hotmail.com](mailto:jerrygietka@hotmail.com).

**Send Members in the News or any informational articles to [virginia.ryker@gmail.com](mailto:virginia.ryker@gmail.com).**