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The 2011 Gracie's Choice Awards

Presented by the Alliance for Women in Media

By Adrienne Papp | June 26, 2011

Imagine a world where:

Every girls grows up with the self-esteem she needs to reach her full potential....,

Every woman enjoys feeling confident in her own beauty....,

We all help to build self-esteem in the people we love the most....,

That was the vision that this year's sponsor, Dove skin care products proposed as part of their support of the 2011 Gracie Awards. As evidenced in this inspiring star-studded celebration of feminine power, this is a great time to be alive for women. In spite of many economic challenges, the progress made by so many disenfranchised groups in recent years has been breathtaking. And in a ballroom at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles it was thrilling to see so many women being honored for their creative efforts in communications programming created by women, for wom en and about women, across wide platform of media.



Christy Turlington

The 36th Annual Gracie Awards, held on May 25 2011, is a way of celebrating so many of the accomplishments of women in entertainment media. Presented by the Alliance for Women in Media Foundation and sponsored by Dove skin care products, Disney, HBO, CBS Radio, TNT, the Ford Motor Company, Wells Fargo and a host of other sponsors, the Gracie Award show is an extravaganza toasting the best and brightest women in media, a broad cross section of female talent from all walks of life, individuals who have made exemplary contributions in their respective fields.

Hosted by Patricia Heaton of ABC's hit show "The Middle," the 2011 Gracies was a virtual Who's Who of professional women in media. Among the awardees were the CBS "60 Minutes" interview with Academy-Award winning director

Kathryn Bigelow, Meredith Vieira as Outstanding Anchor News for the NBC News produced Today Show, TV star Joan Lunden for Outstanding Talk Show, the ubiquitous Betty White as the Outstanding Female Actor in a Comedy for "Hot in Cleveland," Claire Danes for Outstanding Actor in a Drama for HBO's "Temple Grandin," and Shaun Robinson, who received the Dove Real Beauty Award presented by Lauren Harper and Holly Robinson Peete. It is the Gracies Awards and an ever-increasing number of female-centric programs that recognize women in the arts, education and entertainment that help make the world aware of the accomplishments that women have been providing all along. In spite of the glass-ceiling syndrome, which is now cracking and is in the process of disintegrating, women have made incredible but sometimes overlooked, inroads in modern culture. Kathryn Bigelow, it should be noted, became the first woman to win the Academy Award for Best Director, the Directors Guild of America Award for



The Gracie Awards 2011

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Outstanding Directing, and the BAFTA Award for Best Direction for her war film *The Hurt Locker*, a trifecta that has never before been accomplished by a woman.

Laura Ziskin, although not a recipient at the show, should be also mentioned alongside this group, as she recently passed away from breast cancer and was an incredibly strong force in Hollywood. Ziskin is perhaps best known for producing the three *Spider-Man* movies starring Tobey Maguire and Kirsten Dunst that grossed \$2.5 billion at the box office worldwide. In 2002, she became the first woman to produce the Oscar broadcast solo and also produced the 2007 ceremony (and was the woman who convinced Woody Allen to appear on the show). In 2008 Ziskin, along with other entertainment notables including newswoman Katie Couric, co-founded *Stand Up To Cancer*, an advocacy group for cancer research. At the age of 61, she passed away far too early.



Erin and Juliana

There was so much to be proud of and so much recognition for the accomplished women in our world, which however would be impossible to list within the scope this article. But what is important to take away from a show like the Gracies is the strong spirit that is present in the vast community of women who put their soul and intelligence into projects that make everyone's life so much richer. From the women who broadcast the outstanding sports program on ESPN, to investigative reporting that gets inside the most important stories of our time, to biographies and comedies and reality shows, women are no longer just the worker bees behind the scenes. They have now stepped into the spotlight and are the ones who have become the creators, the voices, the messengers that bring a kinder, gentler, more intuitive approach to the entertainment, news and educational programs we benefit from.

The amazing and exemplary women who were publicly recognized at the Gracies Awards have been recognized for their greatness because they refuse to be relegated to secondary citizen status and strive for the self-fulfillment they receive by being true to themselves. A public awards show like the Gracies and the light it shines on these women can be an inspiration to the younger generation, a clear indicator that the traditional roles that women were relegated to don't have to be accepted anymore. Along with the elegance and grace of the event a new and exceptionally talented young fashion designer, Rachel Weathersby stood out of the crowd, not by her personal presence, but by the dress I wore made by her. She is the only female designer known today who preserves the trends of times and brings about the beauty of the royal ages before us into an elegance that is not only timeless, but memorable.

It must be noted that the Women in Media alliance is getting more and more recognition. The 36th Annual Gracie Awards will air on the Hallmark Movie Channel on August 8, 2011, during prime time, and then again as a daytime encore on August 12.

The Gracies is a call to women everywhere to follow their own individual path, listen to the personal voices that speak to them, tell the stories, write the books and make the movies that they imagine in the depths of their creative spirit. If women do this, they will bring about a whole new world! And, in that world, men and women will both feel much more appreciated!

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