First National STN Submission Garners Honorable Mention

University School students earned an impressive honorable mention with their first Student Television Network (STN) national challenge entry. School was in session less than a month when Upper School students Brandon Berman, Victoria Kohl, Jordan Kulla and Michael Wilner decided to compete against high school students nationwide in a timed STN challenge. The TV and film students had just six days to conceive, write, film, edit and post online their finished video after STN announced the topic for its fall challenge categories.

Adding to the pressure were the strict rules that prohibited use of interviews or footage not shot during the contest period. In addition, production teams were limited to four students, and advisors could not shoot, write or edit any part of the “hands-off” challenge entry. The television industry professionals judging the competition scored points in camera/direction, lighting, audio, natural sound, editing, drama/human interest, storytelling, script writing, creativity, journalistic integrity/courage, acting/talent and followed directions.

When the results were announced following Thanksgiving break, University School had won one of the only five awards given.

“This is national,” said USchool teacher Frank Mullin. “STN has first, second, third and two honorable mentions, and we got one of the honorable mentions.”

USchool’s participation with STN will add five new opportunities to an already expanding contest calendar. While TV and film students regularly shine in the Jim Harbin Festival and Suncoast Emmys competitions, USchool won last year’s Miami Coalition for the Homeless PSA contest, and two students were accepted this fall to the Ft. Lauderdale International Film Festival. According to Mullin, students will further submit eight entries to the next STN challenge, as well as one or two entries for the news competition and spring contest.

To senior Victoria Kohl, the expanding slate of competition entries goes hand-in-hand with the program’s expansion. “It’s incredible,” said Kohl, a serial award-winning TV and film student. “You can’t find a program like this in other schools in this area.”

“Just in the span of four years we went from a studio the size of a closet with six computers in a tiny room to this big studio with all this equipment, lights and upgraded technology,” Kohl added. “I think that’s amazing because it is definitely going to help other kids interested in TV. I know it has helped me develop. And I wouldn’t be where I am without it.”