

Usher attends the sixth annual Do Something Awards at the Apollo Theater

Photo: Mike Coppola/FilmMagic

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Usher, Akon And More Honor Young People At The Do Something Awards

Awards honor Darius Weems and other young people making positive changes in the world.

By Eric Ditzian, with reporting by Akshay Bhansali

In 2005, Darius Weems set out from Georgia on a quest to travel across the country to Los Angeles and fulfill his dream. While that sounds like a typical, almost clichéd story, Darius' journey was just a bit different.

The 15-year-old suffers from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), an ultimately fatal genetic disease that also claimed the life of his older brother, and is confined to a wheelchair. But along with 11 college-age kids, Darius rented a wheelchair-accessible RV and headed West to increase awareness about DMD, raise much-needed funds for the disease and convince MTV to customize his wheelchair on "Pimp My Ride."

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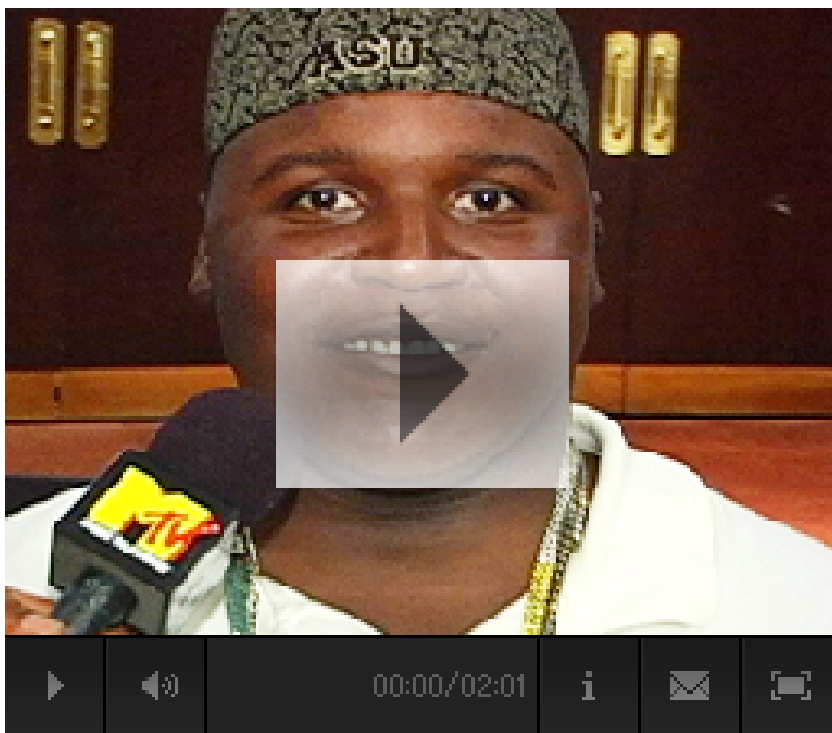
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They filmed the entire journey for a documentary that went on to garner 28 film-festival awards worldwide and raise \$1.6 million for DMD. On Thursday night at the Do Something Awards at New York's Apollo Theater, Darius was honored for his commitment to working for positive change.

Usher, Akon, Russell Simmons and Lil Mama were among those in attendance to honor Darius and the four other young people receiving awards. The night's

overall winner, a 22-year-old named Maggie Doyne who set up a school and orphanage in Nepal, received \$100,000 in community grants.

After Darius accepted his award and a \$10,000 grant, our own Sway Calloway surprised the teenager with news that his doc, called "Darius Goes West," will air on MTV2 and mtvU in the fall.

"I just hope my story lives on and resonates in the community and in schools, and I just hope the story lives on and is able to motivate people for years and years to come," Darius told MTV News.

Usher urged young people to remember that everyone has the ability to give back to the community. "Raw power is truly in service," the singer said. "You can make a difference. Every time that you experience some sort of change, it took labor. It took physical time to make a change."

Akon, who founded his own charitable foundation, couldn't have been happier to come out in support of Darius and his fellow winners. "My main thing is always about the kids at the end of the day," Akon said. "That's why we even started the Konfidence Foundation was to create a better environment for the kids. This right here is the blessing of it. These are the reasons why I am who I am."

Simmons echoed that sentiment. "Whenever you see young people doing good or

giving — it's an inspiration because it's mostly from the heart," he said. "When we cultivate that or we push for that, then they become great citizens. You know we are born for service. I don't want to get too deep, but it's a science of service. When you fit into it right, then you are happier."

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