

Burstein of Weston wins Do Something Award

Written by Patricia Gay
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High School Musical star Corbin Bleu, left hosted the Do Something Awards, honoring five young adults, including David Burstein of Weston. Weston filmmaker David Burstein was presented with a 2009 Do Something Award and a \$10,000 prize for his documentary film 18 in '08.

The award was presented at a star-studded ceremony at New York's Apollo Theater, and included celebrities Usher, Akon, and Amber Tamblyn. It was hosted by Corbin Bleu, star of High School Musical. Hip hop mogul Russell Simmons presented Mr. Burstein with his award. "I feel fantastic about winning a Do Something Award," said Mr. Burstein after the ceremony. "To have someone say your project is awesome and put money behind it as well is really cool."

Mr. Burstein will use the \$10,000 prize for his non-profit organization, 18 in '08, which produced the documentary of the same name. The film features Mr. Burstein in interviews with national political leaders and encourages young people to register to vote in the 2008 presidential election. During the campaign season, Mr. Burstein brought the film to college campuses across America and registered upwards of 25,000 new voters between the ages of 18 and 22.

"Even though the election is over, I still want to get young people involved in the political process, not just at election time," Mr. Burstein said. He will use the award to improve his Web site, www.18in08.com, and hold interactive online town meetings to bring young voters closer in touch with their elected officials. In addition to the cash prize, Mr. Burstein was also awarded several mini slip cameras, which will be useful for filmmaking.

Mr. Burstein, 20, is a graduate of Weston High School, and was one of the directors of the Westport Youth Film Festival. He lives on Langner Lane with his parents Dan Burstein, a pop culture writer, and Julie O'Connor, photographer and author of the book, *Doors of Weston*. Mr. Burstein attended Haverford College for one year, and has transferred to New York University, where starting this fall he will work on an independent major, combining film, media and politics.

"New York is one of my favorite cities and NYU is a great school with a lot of resources that will help expand my learning," Mr. Burstein said. He is also in the process of writing a book about the millennial generation and how it is changing the way society works as a result of new media and technology.

The Do Something Awards are given annually by the Do Something Foundation, a non-profit group that was founded by actor Andrew Shue while he was on the TV show *Melrose Place*. The organization encourages young people to volunteer their time and work on meaningful, world-changing projects. Mr. Burstein and four other young adults received the 2009 Do Something awards, while a grand prize winner was chosen from the finalists in an Internet Web poll.

Maggie Doyne, 22, of Mendham, N.J., received the grand prize of \$100,000. While on a backpacking trip to Asia, Ms. Doyne decided to use her life savings to buy an acre of land in Nepal, where she built a children's orphanage. She currently cares for 25 kids and has helped find families for 700 orphans. Her next plan is to build them a school.

Other award recipients include Marvelyn Brown, 24, of Nashville, Tenn., who contracted the HIV virus from her boyfriend, and now gives talks and lectures at schools to urge teens to protect themselves and get tested. Eric Glustrom, 24, of Boulder, Colo., founded Educate!, a program to train community leaders in Africa. Darius Weems, 19, of Athens, Ga., was born with Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), a genetic disorder that claimed the life of his older brother. He has raised almost \$2 million for DMD research, and traveled over 100,000 miles educating others.

"It was wonderful being recognized with the other finalists who have given so much of themselves for their projects. I especially congratulate Maggie Doyne for her work with orphans. She is doing something very good and concrete for people," Mr. Burstein said.

