

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 3, 2021

First Ever NATAS Junior Board Created By Chicago/Midwest Chapter

The Chicago-Midwest chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) is pleased to announce the launch of its inaugural Junior Board - **the first of its kind among the 19 NATAS chapters nationwide.**

The Junior Board will consist of 30 students and young professionals, all under the age of 26, who either attend school or work in one of the chapter's eight television markets: Chicago, Peoria-Bloomington, and Rockford in Illinois, South Bend-Elkhart in Indiana, and Green Bay-Appleton, Madison, Milwaukee, and Wausau-Rhineland in Wisconsin.

They will join the NATAS Chicago/Midwest Board of Governors in the chapter's mission to advance and promote broadcasting and excellence in visual media in the region. The Junior Board, however, is explicitly tasked with engaging younger members of our broadcast industry.

"We look at the Junior Board as another means for NATAS to provide outreach to the younger people in our community, who are of vital importance to our industry's future," said NATAS Chicago/Midwest Board President John Owens.

"We are beyond thrilled with the scope of knowledge these young people will bring to our organization. We really need this fresh energy for our chapter. Having a Junior Board will help us create new relationships with up-and-coming content creators and the media platforms they use," said Rebekah Cowing, the chapter's Executive Director and solitary staff member.

The 30-member board consists of a wide variety of communicators representing 17 colleges and universities in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin, along with 5 broadcast stations in those three states. NATAS Chicago/Midwest received applications from 91 people for spots on the Junior Board, according to Nicolas DeGrazia, the co-chair of the NATAS committee responsible for creating the team.

Junior Board members will have two-year terms beginning in May, 2021, when the group will have the first of its regular meetings.

"This is such an exciting undertaking!" DeGrazia says. "Not only are we carving new territory for our Chapter, we're leading the way for NATAS across the country to form their own Junior Boards. And the impact of these groups of young people coming together across the nation is going to be profound and very long-lasting for our industry."

While the Junior Board will operate independently of the chapter's 24-member Board of Governors, they will have a similar structure, with meetings held on a monthly basis. The Junior Board will have several main committees, including groups to address outreach, social media, education, workshops & seminars, and more.

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“The enthusiasm for the Junior Board was wonderful to see,” said Lee Hood, co-chair of the committee. “The high number of applicants confirmed to us how much young people want to be involved in the NATAS mission.”

The Junior Board will also offer networking opportunities for its members, not just among their peers but also among some of the Midwest’s top working broadcast and production professionals, DeGrazia said.

“Our goal is to introduce the Junior Board to everyone working in Broadcast in our region, in one way or another,” DeGrazia said. “I can’t wait to get back to ‘normal times’ so we can actually go on field trips and create opportunities for our new board to shake some hands and start rolling up their sleeves out in the field.”

He added: “This is a ridiculously talented and driven group of creators. I’m so excited to see what they come up with and the work they’re going to accomplish as a team.”

Short bios for each of the 30 Junior Board members are attached.

The following members of NATAS Board of Governors were part of the Junior Board selection committee: Melissa Forman (WLIT-FM), Roz Varon (ABC-7), Nick Blumberg (WTTW), Guy DiBenedetto (ABC-7), Kristin Pichaske (Columbia College), Jessica Garcia-Marble (WTMJ-TV), Lee Hood (Loyola University), Yolanda Joe (Ill. Lt. Governor’s office), John Owens (Weigel Broadcasting), Nicolas DeGrazia (Bitter Jester Studios), Rebekah Cowing (NATAS Chicago/Midwest executive director) and John Owens (Weigel Broadcasting).

The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Chicago/Midwest Chapter was founded in 1958. It is one of the largest NATAS chapters in the United States, with a proud history of innovation and excellence in the field of broadcast television and beyond.



Samantha Albert is a senior at DePaul University graduating this upcoming June with a Bachelor's degree in Communications and Media. She has always been interested in television, video production, and entertainment.

Samantha became familiar with iMovie as a kid and has been editing with it and software like Final Cut Pro, Premiere Pro, and After Effects. Samantha has also harnessed many other skills through her internships for LeFair Magazine, a Los Angeles based fashion magazine, and Missed Calls Podcast, a Chicago based sports podcast, in addition to all kinds of work experience in customer service. Determined, outgoing, and teachable as well as a team leader are just a few adjectives to describe Samantha.

For fun, she loves to film and edit videos for her YouTube channel. Samantha is excited to put her talents to use to help positively impact the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and the television industry.



Born and raised in the city of Chicago, **Amani Ashford** was instantly driven by creativity. Media always played a part of his life, be it socially or via radio, magazines, or good old-fashioned TV.

Amani began his journey filming church services. Under the supervision of his older cousin (the Education Technology Administrator at Houston Methodist Church) he learned how to broadcast and interact with people, helping to entertain through media.

He later joined Free Spirit Media (FSM), which enhanced his basic production skills and knowledge. There he was able to express himself and represent his creativity. Amani was given the opportunity to create news packages, short films, and much more, all while collaborating with others toward a common goal.

Amani is forever grateful to serve and be a part of this world-changing industry! He currently attends Malcolm X College double majoring in Political Science and Media.



Rachel Asir is a student at The University of Chicago where she studies Economics and Cinema & Media Studies.

She has been interested in working in the entertainment industry from a very young age and has interned at multiple reputable film production companies including Lionsgate, Silk Mass, and FilmNation Entertainment. Rachel aspires to be a talent/literary manager/agent. Her main career goal is to create and inspire more diverse content in Hollywood.

She was born and raised in Princeton, New Jersey, to two Indian immigrants, and she attended an all-girls school from pre-school through 12th grade. Rachel loves to write and her background inspires her to write about strong, diverse, female characters.

Aside from writing, Rachel loves to act and sing and ride her bike on Lake Shore Drive when it's not too cold in Chicago.



Ariana Baldassano is an incoming Supervising Producer for WGN's morning show. Most recently, she spent two years as a producer at the CBS affiliate in Madison, Wisconsin.

Ariana graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2019 with a double-major in Journalism and Communication Arts. Ariana grew up in Barrington, Illinois where she won seven Crystal Pillar/Student Emmy awards from NATAS Chicago as a student at Barrington High School.

She is also the 2015 recipient of the NATAS Chicago Carol Cooling-Kopp Memorial Scholarship. Ariana is passionate about journalism ethics, and believes journalists should be constantly critiquing themselves and their industry to build trust in the communities they cover.

Outside of journalism, Ariana is involved with Special Olympics and enjoys biking and walking around her new neighborhood.



Alan-Mychal Boyd is a 2021 graduate of the University of Notre Dame with dual degrees in Film and Political Science. He grew up on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, home to the Sicangu Lakota (Rosebud Sioux) of which he is an enrolled member. His identity has given him a profound love for family and the advancement of those less fortunate.

At Notre Dame, he served as the President of the Native American Student Association of Notre Dame, in which he worked to cultivate a welcoming and thriving Native community on campus.

Alan-Mychal is a four-time recipient of the Cobell Scholarship Award. He has previously worked with Fighting Irish Media (also at Notre Dame) as a student worker on live broadcasts. His passions include screenwriting, all things Spider-Man, discussing film & television, Indigenous solidarity, and the Green Bay Packers.



Sam Brief is a sports broadcaster and media relations professional. In October, 2020, Sam joined Chicago State University as Assistant Director for Communications and Broadcasting, where he serves as the play-by-play voice for the Cougars' 13 varsity athletics programs.

Upon graduating in 2019 from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Sam joined the Chicago Dogs of the American Association of Independent Professional Baseball as Broadcast and Media Relations Manager. He maintains a role as the team's play-by-play broadcaster

Sam has also worked in broadcasting and production roles for WLS-TV, the Chicago Bulls, the Chicago Cubs, the Cotuit Kettleers and MLB Network. As a writer, he has reported for both Sports Illustrated and the Chicago Tribune, where he first covered local sports in 2013.

In 2015, the NFHS Network selected Sam as the country's "Best Student Broadcaster," and his documentary, "One Yard," was named by the Chicago Television Educators Council as the best in Chicagoland.



Alexandria Brown was born and raised in St. Louis Missouri, and obtained her Bachelors in Filmmaking at Columbia College Chicago. She is an Editor and Reporter for the Newsroom The Real Chi.

She also owns Pretty Brown eyes LLC, a boutique production company where she writes, directs, and produces video projects for a target audience. Alexandria dedicates her work to projects that are outside of the box, socially driven, and innovative.

Alexandria filmed a short self-written/directed film titled Nowhere to run, which is a thriller about how Black Women are the most unprotected demographic in America. She is also the executive producer of an Interview series called Out the mud, where local Entrepreneurs of color talk, making nothing into something!

She is also the founder of the non-profit Protect Sisters Foundation, which is dedicated to raising money for black women. Alexandria believes art can change the world.



Becky Budds is a senior at DePaul University studying journalism and public relations. Her passion for journalism began in high school when she joined and eventually produced the weekly news show called Wildcat Weekly.

Now, the Naperville, IL native currently works as a news intern at Naperville Community Television 17 and works as a reporter for Radio DePaul and Good Day DePaul. Her favorite stories to cover are ones that are local and that impact the community.

Becky's favorite accomplishments are winning Radio DePaul's Best News Anchor award and being a part of DePaul's Center for Journalism Integrity and Excellence. After graduation, she hopes to get a job as an on-air reporter in any city that's warm and hopes to win an Emmy one day.

When Becky isn't working on news stories, she's baking (think: chocolate chip cookies), working out, hanging out with friends, or shopping.



Alexis Carpello is a Weekend Anchor/Producer and Nightside Reporter at WTVO/WQRF in Rockford, Illinois. She joined that team in 2019. Before getting to that position, Alexis studied Multimedia Journalism with a concentration in broadcast at Columbia College Chicago. During her time in school, Alexis was an anchor and reporter for the college's student run newscast, Metro Minutes.

Alexis has covered a vast array of stories while at WTVO/WQRF, but her favorite ones are the stories that have helped spark change, big or small.

Alexis' grew up in Darien, a south-western suburb of Chicago. Her passion for journalism began in high school where Alexis was part of the newspaper club. She believes that journalism is about giving a voice to the voiceless.

In her free time, Alexis enjoys being with friends and family and cheering on the Cubs and Blackhawks!



Steffie Drucker brings a varied professional background to the junior board. Her primary role is Social Media Producer & Strategist for “Windy City LIVE” (WCL) ABC 7 Chicago’s top-rated talk show, where she develops and executes content strategy across the show’s social channels.

She occasionally produces on-air segments for WCL and contributes to station specials, including the New Year’s Eve show “Countdown Chicago,” for which she won an Emmy in 2020. She also assists with newsroom insights for the station.

Outside of Channel 7, Steffie does social media curation and email marketing for a research center at Northwestern University and the documentary production company Kindling Group. She also writes for the award-winning “Curiosity Daily” science podcast and works at her family’s restaurant, Superdawg Drive-in.

Steffie is a proud alumna of the U. of I. – Urbana-Champaign. She loves dogs and enjoys cooking, reading, watching TV, and listening to podcasts.



Tamia Fowlkes is a student at UW-Madison majoring in Journalism and Political Science with certificates in Gender and Women’s Studies and Leadership. On campus, she serves as the Big 10 Voting Challenge Intern for the Morgridge Center of Public Service and as a Student Council Representative for the Associated Students of Madison.

Previously, Tamia has served as a Google News Initiative Fellow for the Isthmus, a Reporting Intern for The Wisconsin State Journal and an NBC News Fellow. Driven by her passions for politics, education and activism, Tamia co-created The Student Civic Immersion Program which aids high school students in crafting service projects centered around civic engagement and policy issues like environmental justice, racial equity, and voter suppression.

She co-hosts a podcast called Pod-Cast Your Vote which aims to mobilize and empower youth voters. All of her experiences have heightened her passion for journalism and leadership.



Nihar Gagneja is a sound editor based in Chicago, IL working in the film and television industry. He attended Northwestern University where he studied sound design and statistics.

During his time there, Nihar recorded and mixed countless student films and served as Head of Sound in Niteskool Productions, a student-run production house featuring musical talent from Northwestern and the Chicago area.

He now works in a variety of capacities, including location sound recording, sound design, and re-recording mixing. Nihar’s favorite part of sound design is getting to collaborate with directors and use his combination of analytical and artistic skills to help them fulfill their vision.

Nihar is also passionate about music and sound design education. If he’s not hunched over a Pro Tools session, you’ll probably find him on a hammock near the lake, reading a good book.



Aimee Galaszewski is studying Journalism and Digital Media at Marquette University. She is originally from Milwaukee and grew up with Marquette in her blood.

During her time at Marquette, Aimee has been heavily involved in student media. She has served as a Sports Reporter, Assistant Sports Producer, and the Marquette University Television General Manager. She was recently promoted to Executive Director of the Marquette Wire for next year.

Aimee has received awards for her video feature stories, audio packages, and sideline reporting and plans to pursue a career in television producing post-grad. She also has a strong interest in sports broadcasting. Her mission is to support and create an inclusive environment for women in sports media.

Outside of her work at the Marquette Wire, Aimee is also a Resident Assistant on Marquette's campus. You'll find her playing tennis or taking her springer spaniel for long walks in her free time.



At first meet, **Melyssa Guzman** is an energetic and upbeat person who loves to get to know people in depth. She is a born and raised south-side Chicagoan with a passion for entertainment.

In high school she started her YouTube channel where her passion for the entertainment industry began. During her undergraduate years, she dabbled in various multimedia projects.

Melyssa started her blog Dreamer and the City, where she shared fashion and beauty tips to her readers. Her YouTube channel has been a work-in-progress but she focuses on fashion, beauty, and vlogs.

At DePaul she got to star in a student film and, in the summer of 2019, she was an executive producer for a podcast that inspired her to start Chisme with Mely an entertainment and lifestyle podcast of her own.

In her free time Melyssa loves to show her personality through editorial makeup. She loves to wear vibrant eyeshadow colors with jewels and pearls on her eyes and share her looks on Instagram.



Ellie Hall is a freelance editor, artist, and foodie, working at the intersection of industry. Her diverse portfolio includes feature films, music videos, documentaries, and indie shorts. Originally focused on experimental video art, Ellie received her bachelors from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2018. After graduating, she has since grown to develop her career as an editor in both commercial video and independent film.

As an editor Ellie believes her job is, in essence, about creating relationships between material. It is by no coincidence that her favorite pastimes outside of editing revolve around puzzles and sewing- chalk it up to a guilty pleasure for matchmaking.

In collaboration with other Chicagoland artists, her work has been highlighted by NPR and the Chicago Film Office, and has been seen at the MCA, Midwest Independent Film Festival, and Chicago Cultural Center. Ellie is excited to be on the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Junior Board and sees it as an opportunity to foster community amongst other emerging professionals.



Sara Janz is a freelance photographer and videographer currently working for Lifetouch as a photographer of student portraits, sports, and special events. Prior to the pandemic, she was a studio camera operator for Big Ten Network Sports.

While at Columbia Collage Chicago she interned at Windy City Live, and worked as Utility for parades and live programing including the Chicago Auto Show and the New Year's Eve show.

Sara has had the opportunity to work with Arica Hilton and the Hilton | Asmus Contemporary Art Gallery in River North and edited a documentary on world renowned Wildlife photographer David Arrow.

Sara was the recipient of a Crystal Pillar Award and a scholarship from the Chicago/Midwest Chapter of NATAS. She is also a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars.

In her spare time, Sara enjoys plays Guitar, Piano, and composing her own music. She is an animal lover with a preference for cats.



Julia Kruger is a student at Northwestern University studying Radio/Television/Film, with a certificate in Integrated Marketing Communications and a minor in Creative Writing. Originally from New York City, she could not be more excited to be a member of the inaugural Junior Board of the NATAS Chicago/Midwest Chapter!

Her goals throughout her term are to foster a sense of community and collaboration with other young people interested in entering the entertainment industry and to learn from some of the best industry teachers and mentors.

When she is not watching and working on ideas for movies and television, Julia enjoys walking her dog, Molly, playing tennis and ping pong, and spending time with family and friends. She is thrilled to have joined this incredible organization and cannot wait to see what everyone creates together!



Arden Kurhayez is a writer, musician, and performer. She worked as a social media manager for Cardinal Public Relations and as an editor for 30 North Literary Magazine before graduating from North Central College in 2021, where she studied Organizational Communication, English, and Interactive Media.

During that time, Arden conducted research on influencers and YouTube apology videos, and her team received a Top Paper Award from the Central States Communication Association for their research.

For most of Arden's life, she's been a guitarist, singer, and songwriter, so she can be found writing songs and playing shows around the Chicagoland area with her band, Double Identity, whenever possible.

When she isn't busy balancing all of the above, she's either writing and editing the latest draft of her novel or binge-watching her favorite TV shows.



Anthony Landahl is delighted to be a part of the Junior Board. Since January, 2021, he has been a member of Nexstar Media's Aggregated Content team based out of WGN Studios in Chicago.

A graduate of Bradley U. in Peoria, IL, Anthony majored in Television Arts and studied Journalism. He was a part of the campus TV station BUTV as a Producer and Anchor. He was also part of the student newspaper, The Scout, in myriad roles including Managing Editor and Podcast Producer.

Anthony worked as a photographer and multimedia journalist at WEEK-TV, the NBC-affiliate TV station in Peoria as well. In 2020, the Chicago-Midwest chapter of NATAS awarded him the Tom Skilling Scholarship.

Anthony strives to be curious and learn as much as he can. In his free time he enjoys making short documentaries with local historical societies, preparing a scrumptious meal, or experiencing the outdoors. He currently resides in Brookfield, IL.



Larry Larson is a Sports Communication major and Journalism minor at Bradley University pursuing a career in sports broadcasting.

At Bradley, Larry is the sports editor of The Scout student newspaper, where he also works as the paper's Men's Basketball Beat Reporter. Additionally, Larry is an active member of Braves Vision, where he provides play-by-play, color commentary and sideline reporting for The Valley on ESPN+.

In August 2019, Larry and another Bradley student co-founded Clutch Sports Media – a website that provides broadcasts of high school sporting events in the Peoria area. The last two summers, he has served as a broadcaster for the Northwoods League's Rockford Rivets, and was named the NWL Announcer of the year in 2020.

In his free time, Larry enjoys traveling to National Parks, playing golf, and watching the Cubs and the Bears. You can find him on Twitter (@MLBLarry) and Instagram (@LarryLarsonSports).



An Atlanta native, **Lauren Melton's** passion for the arts stems from a background in dance – particularly ballet – and later transitioned into screen media and performance. Now, Lauren is a third-year student at The University of Chicago studying Cinema and Media, English, and Theater.

She has worked with The Department of Motion Pictures and Atlanta Ballet and currently works as the Assistant to the Production Manager at the David and Reva Logan Center for the Arts.

Lauren is passionate about screenwriting and acting and has enjoyed the opportunity to act in several theater productions and student films as well as write and produce her own work. Through the organization "Young Life," she enjoys getting to know and mentor high school kids in the Chicago area.

Additionally, she enjoys getting to know her fellow students as the Outreach Chair for her church's undergraduate organization. In her free time, Lauren loves bingeing shows and getting emotional about any dog she sees.



Ronan Morrissey is a Film Student at DePaul University working towards his BFA in Directing and Screenwriting. While attending DePaul, Ronan has created numerous short films from a variety of genres with a focus on delivering unique perspectives to the human experience, highlighting the absurdity of our everyday life. His work seeks to show the similarities we all share as humans.

Some of Ronan's shorts have gone on to screen at festivals including the Los Angeles Lift Off Film Festival, DePaul Premiere Film Festival, and the Florida Comedy Film Festival, where his short film "The Box" was an award winner.

Currently, Ronan interns for Thunder Road Pictures and Don Kee Productions, two production companies based in L.A. After graduation, he plans to continue writing and directing while pursuing work opportunities in talent representation and creative development. Ronan's long-term plans are to direct feature films and television shows and eventually open his own production company.



Aliyah Muhammad is attending Illinois State University with a Major in Mass Media / Television Production and a Minor in Film Studies. She has worked as a Control Room Assistant, Multimedia Journalist, and Newscast Director at TV-10 News. She has also experimented with advertising at WZND radio and has helped produce local comedy shows.

As the President of the Student Television Workshop, she helps teach other students about cameras and editing and aspires to one day work in film and television in a directing or screenwriting position. Aliyah also desires to gain experience in as many aspects of the entertainment industry as possible, especially producing.

When she isn't studying screenwriting, cinematography, or producing, Aliyah enjoys collaborating and sharing ideas with her classmates, reading comic books, painting, and watching dramatic movies. Some of her favorite directors include Ingmar Bergman, Barry Jenkins, and Guillermo del Toro. Aliyah plans to graduate in the Spring of 2022.



Maya Puterbaugh currently attends the University of Notre Dame as a member of the Class of 2022. In addition to double majoring in Marketing and Film, Television, & Theatre, Maya works on campus as a Stagehand in the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center and Production Assistant with Fighting Irish Media.

While her recent experience is in film and television, she got her roots in theatre acting for the first time in her 3rd grade production of Cinderella. In her free time, Maya holds several board positions in clubs at Notre Dame including Vice President of the Filipino American Student Organization, Events Coordinator of California Club, and Advising Fellow for Matriculate, a non-profit that pairs college students with high-achieving, low-income high school students to guide them through the college application process.

Maya's hobbies include baking, dancing (swing dance and Latin styles), singing, and trying out new foods with her friends.



Joey Safchik is a 2021 graduate of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, where she received degrees in journalism, political science and international studies. Joey served for three years as the news director of Northwestern News Network. She also reported for every broadcast on topics ranging from climate change to student protests.

Her work was recognized with two Best of Medill awards and three NATAS Chicago/Midwest Student awards. She has interned at NBC Nightly News, KGET (Bakersfield, CA), and ABC7 Chicago. Joey spent the winter of 2020 reporting from Capitol Hill for Medill News Service and traveled to the Middle East on a reporting trip with Medill.

She is also the recipient of a NATAS scholarship, an Illinois News Broadcaster Association's scholarship, and several Society of Professional Journalist Mark of Excellence Awards. Joey believes journalism is a noble service to our communities and our democracy.



Tiyen Simmons is a Chicago-native who dwells in the South Chicagoland area. Tiyen has always had a passion for art, music, and media production.

Unsure of a career choice, he began his journey at Prairie State Community College, taking a number of art and production courses, in hopes of finding a major that suited him. After receiving his Associates Degree there, he attended the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he majored in Theatre Production and Design.

At UIC, Tiyen found himself shackled by the boundaries put upon him so he transferred to Governors State University, majoring in Media Studies with a concentration in Production and Technology.

Currently, he works as a Production Assistant for the university's production team, as well as the one of the Director/Producers of the school's sports broadcasts. Tiyen looks to use this journey as building blocks, hoping to someday have his own production company.



Jay Stahl is a native of Wausau, Wisconsin in the state's scenic Northwoods region. He is currently a broadcast journalism major at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM).

At UWM, Jay serves as President of the university's student Minority Media Association and is a member of its Journalism Club. He is a two-time Milwaukee Press Club Award-winner for video and print storytelling as a student reporter at two UWM publications, The UWM Post and Media Milwaukee.

Jay was named a Wausau Daily Herald 2019 Person of the Year by his hometown's primary newspaper for extensive community work on diversity, inclusion, and equality efforts. He is expected to graduate from UWM in the fall of 2021 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies.

In his free time, Jay enjoys spending time with friends and family, watching reality TV, and traveling to far-away places.



Juliette Strangio is an Australian filmmaker currently residing in Chicago.

Recently entering the festival sphere, her debut feature film *Cecily and Lydia at the Waypoint* has screened at various festivals and was awarded Best First Time Filmmaker twice – once from the Toronto International Women’s Film Festival and once from the Chicago Indie Awards.

Juliette is a professor of screenwriting at The Second City while working as a Script Coordinator and Executive Assistant in Television. She studied Film and Television Production at Swinburne University where she received scholarships to work in India and Jordan.

She co-produced the web series *Double Date Night* before moving to Chicago to participate in the inaugural class at the Harold Ramis Film School. She later co-produced the independent feature *Sunflower Starfish*.



Carmen Vincent is a freelance video editor and documentary filmmaker from Chesterton, IN with a fire inside her to engage with a diverse range of people and stories through her work.

Carmen believes everyone deserves to feel understood in their own skin and commits to telling raw, often misunderstood stories that amplify and validate people’s authentic experiences.

Carmen holds a bachelor’s degree in Digital Media from Valparaiso University and participates in numerous professional organizations such as FWD-Doc, D-Word, Women in Media, IDA, and others. She is a Nikon Storytellers Scholar, a participant in Adobe's Creator Camp, and a proud recipient of the Best International Director award at the Georgia Documentary Film Festival.

Her portfolio of work focuses on mental health, disability, sexuality/LGBTQ, nonprofit stories, and more. You can view her work at www.carmenvincent.com.



Lauren Yaccino is a video editor from Chicago. She is a 2021 graduate from DePaul University's College of Computing and Digital Media with a BFA in film and television editing.

For the past six years, Lauren has worked as a freelance editor on a variety of projects including commercials, educational content, documentaries, and music videos. She appreciates the creative challenges each project provides and is always eager to learn more about her craft. The art of storytelling has always been her true passion. Lauren loves that she can utilize her editing, motion graphics, color correction, and visual effects work to turn ideas into reality.

In her free time, Lauren enjoys creative writing, painting miniatures, and playing video games. For the past three years, her writing has been published in DePaul’s literature magazine, *Crook & Folly*. Lauren is honored to be part of the first NATAS Junior Board.