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2009 Sparky Awards at Penn Celebrate Information Sharing

Philadelphia, PA - Ryan A. Leonard (C'10) was awarded the 2009 Sparky Award at Penn for his video "Heroes Wash Up" and will receive a video camera valued at \$500. Sponsored by the Penn Libraries, the Cinema Studies Program and the Center for Public Health Initiatives, the contest invites students to create new, two-minute videos that imaginatively portray the benefits of the open, legal exchange of information. The Weigle Information Commons provided equipment and support for students working on contest entries.

Ryan's winning video features doctors, nurses and staff from the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (HUP) and provides a light-hearted, musical look at the important public health issue of hand-washing to prevent the spread of illness.

According to Ryan, "It is easier now for people to dabble in [the] medium of film. The Sparky Awards and competitions like it empower students from all disciplines to create not just for creation's sake, but with purpose. And while students are getting their messages across, they are also bringing some order to the chaotic landscape of online video."

Dr. Marjorie Bowman, Director of Penn's Center for Public Health Initiatives, commented, "Ryan has created an innovative video with many creative elements, including involving individuals directly in the hospital, who in turn can inspire others. The public health message is particularly important during this time of flu outbreaks."

Anu Vedantham, Director of the Weigle Information Commons, was enthusiastic about the awards. "This is our first year hosting the national Sparky Awards," she said. "The contest is a fun and unique way to engage students with issues related to open access."

Colleges and universities across North America hosted local versions of the Sparky Awards. Their winning entrants, as well as Penn's, also participated in the third annual national Sparky Awards contest, organized by SPARC (the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) with additional co-sponsorship by the Association of College and Research Libraries, the Association of Research Libraries, the Penn Libraries, Students for Free Culture, and The Student PIRGs. The national contest winner's video was showcased in January at the American Library Association convention.

The winning video and other entries can be viewed online at <http://tinyurl.com/yfjeru8> and through iTunes U and YouTube.

