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Institutional Advancement

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AIDB chosen as Mercedes-Benz Community Stars \$25,000 Grand-Prize Winner

As Helen Keller once said, “Life is a daring adventure or nothing at all.”

To the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB), the statement is akin to “nothing ventured, nothing gained” and has served the Institute well as they compete on a national scale for two distinct awards.

Daring to venture has resulted in the AIDB Tuscaloosa Regional Center being named a finalist and \$25,000 grand-prize winner in the *Community Stars: Mercedes-Benz Dealers Give Back* program, a celebration of the 125th anniversary of the automobile.

To compete in the distinct contest, charities and non-profits nationwide were challenged to submit a 60-second video in one of five categories—Environment & Sustainability, Health & Service, Youth Empowerment, Arts & Music or Education. AIDB was chosen as a semi-finalist in Education for *AIDB: A Daring Adventure!* with on-line votes ultimately choosing the five \$25,000 grand-prize winners. Winning videos can be viewed at www.facebook.com/mercedesbenzusa?sk=app_202769643121087.

“The *Community Stars: Mercedes-Benz Dealers Give Back* program was an amazing opportunity for AIDB to tell its story to a national audience,” states AIDB President Dr. Terry Graham. “Obviously, we are thrilled with the outcome and want to thank everyone for taking the time to vote and to support AIDB.”

AIDB: A Daring Adventure! depicts the young children who are deaf and blind served through the AIDB Tuscaloosa Regional Center and answers the question, ‘What can I be when I grow up? Absolutely anything!!’ Featuring successful deaf and blind role models including lawyers, educators and a current University of Alabama student, staffers state that *AIDB: A Daring Adventure!* is a ‘triumph of ability over disability.’

The \$25,000 grand-prize will enhance summer work/educational experience programs and/or assistive technology training for students who are deaf and blind served by the AIDB Tuscaloosa Regional Center in Alabama's Black Belt.

"Individuals across the United States and perhaps even the world, made a personal investment of time to vote in support of AIDB," states Dr. Graham. "This investment has made an exceptional difference in the lives of the children and adults we serve and we cannot overstate our appreciation."

And, you can do it again.

As AIDB was promoting *Community Stars: Mercedes-Benz Dealers Give Back*, AIDB's volunteer extraordinaire, Robert Weaver, was nominated to receive The NASCAR Foundation's Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award, honoring four individuals who have "made a significant impact on the lives of children through volunteerism or charitable work," while showing a "distinct and unique passion for NASCAR." Three runners-up will each receive \$25,000 for their designated charity with the winner receiving \$100,000 for their charity of choice.

"I feel like I am one of the highest-paid people at AIDB," explains Weaver. "I don't get a check, but my pay comes direct deposit...to my heart."

The NASCAR Foundation will determine the overall winner by relying on fan votes. To vote once a day, every day for Robert Weaver, visit www.nascar.com/award. Voting ends midnight, December 1. Visit www.aidb.org to view Robert Weaver's full story in *Sights and Sounds*, AIDB's external print magazine.

"I especially want to thank Lynne Hanner, Jessica Parker and Jessica Edmiston, along with our entire Advancement and AIDB Foundation teams, who are tenacious in promoting AIDB at multiple levels," states AIDB President Dr. Terry Graham. "Just as the AIDB story is extraordinary, so are these two opportunities. 'What can deaf and blind children and adults do with their lives?' Of course, our answer is and has always been, 'With your support, absolutely anything!'"

AIDB (www.aidb.org)

More than 150 years strong, AIDB's mission is to provide comprehensive education and service programs of superior quality for children and adults who are deaf, blind and multidisabled and their families. This commitment to excellence is facilitated through

three residential schools, serving children, ages three to 21 from across Alabama (Alabama School for the Blind, Alabama School for the Deaf and Helen Keller School of Alabama); an education/rehabilitation program for adults, 16 and older (E.H. Gentry Facility); and an industrial, manufacturing complex (Alabama Industries for the Blind). In Fiscal Year 2009-10, AIDB served more than 20,000 individuals through its Talladega units and statewide network of Regional Centers located in Birmingham, Dothan, Huntsville, Mobile, Montgomery, Talladega, **Tuscaloosa** and Tuscumbia.

The AIDB Tuscaloosa Regional Center

The AIDB Tuscaloosa Regional Center serves close to 1,100 children and adults who are deaf, blind or multidisabled –and their families – in Bibb, Choctaw, Fayette, Greene, Lamar, Marengo, Perry, Pickens, Sumter, Tuscaloosa and Hale Counties. Tailored to meet individual community needs, the AIDB Tuscaloosa Regional Center provides early intervention services to children, birth to three; Kinderprep classes for toddlers; and individualized services to school-age students not served by AIDB's residential programs. For adults, instruction in assistive technology, orientation and mobility, Braille, and American Sign Language are provided at-large with partnerships developed with municipalities, state agencies and regional businesses which include job coaching, interpreting, Braille/large print reproduction and various workshops.