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Journalists and Activists Gather to Judge the 40th Annual Gracie Awards

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Members of the Alliance for Women in Media including activist and entrepreneur Ariana Ayu, gathered at the National Press Club in Washington, DC last weekend to judge the 40th annual Gracie Awards which will be presented in Beverly Hills, CA (May) and New York City (June).

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Since 1975, the Alliance for Women in Media (AWM) has been honoring outstanding programming for, by, and about women through the Gracie Awards. The Gracie Awards are named for vaudeville, radio, and TV actress/ comedienne Gracie Allen who was internationally known as half of the Burns and Allen comedy duo, with her husband George Burns. Allen was also an entrepreneur and activist and ran for US president in 1940 (as a comedic publicity stunt), receiving 42,000 votes.*

With the 40th annual Gracie Awards coming up this year, AWM members spent this past weekend at the National Press Club in Washington, DC judging approximately 800 entries in television, radio, and digital media. While many entries came from well-established media establishments such as the BBC, CNN, ABC, CBS, OWN (Oprah Winfrey Network), Al Jazeera, and Bloomberg, entries also came in representing the best in student journalism as well. I was really impressed with the caliber of student entries, said entrepreneur and activist Ariana Ayu who participated as a first-time judge last weekend.

The judges were divided into small groups and each group judged several categories over Saturday and Sunday. Categories range from comedy to hard news, and the subject matter of these entries is widely diverse. For the largest categories, a review board consisting of the most experienced judges reviewed the winners of the subcategories to choose the overall winners. Its a big job, remarked Ayu. Sometimes theres a clear-cut winner, but other times its more difficult. For example, how do you compare something that obviously has a huge budget with something made by an independent filmmaker but that has a lot of heart and a great message? The group judging process makes these types of decisions easier. Each group consisted of AWM members with varied backgrounds and a range of professional experiences.

The Alliance for Women in Media was founded in 1951 as American Women in Radio and Television (AWRT) to succeed the womens division of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). Its goals are to improve media quality and social progress, developing and advancing women in the media, and creating engaging content that sparks discussion about the greater need for diversity in the media. So much of our identities are shaped by what we see in the media, says Ayu, what drew me to the Alliance for Women in Media is their commitment to improving the way women are represented. If girls grow up with healthy and realistic role models, theyre much more likely to feel good about who they are, and much less likely to harm themselves or others in pursuit of unrealistic ideals.

The award presentations are so numerous that they are separated into two events: the gala event in Beverly Hills (national level awards) and the awards luncheon in New York City (local,

public, online and student level awards). These will be held on May 19th and June 22nd, respectively.

Ayu plans to attend the Beverly Hills gala this May, as she has previously. Its an incredible event, she says. The media is such an influential power, and The Gracies is all about celebrating those who wield that power for good. Ive attended The Gracies before, but actually getting to see and judge the entries is an honor.

Previous Gracie Award winners have included Christiane Amanpour, Dr. Maya Angelou, Katie Couric, Delilah, Giada de Laurentiis, Linda Ellerbee, Tina Fey, Savannah Guthrie, Chelsea Handler, Mariska Hargitay, Angie Harmon, Patricia Heaton, Florence Henderson, Gayle King, Lisa Kudrow, Queen Latifah, Lisa Ling, Susan Lucci, Debra Messing, Andrea Mitchell, Suze Orman, Sarah Jessica Parker, Amy Poehler, Jessica Simpson, Hannah Storm, Wanda Sykes, Meredith Vieira, Barbara Walters, and many more.

ABOUT ARIANA AYU


Often called Americas Mojo Maven, Ariana Ayu helps businesses grow and succeed with strategic consulting that brings more of their IT factor to life. She is a celebrated business and marketing strategist, interpersonal expert, international speaker, executive coach, activist, and entrepreneur. Author of The Magic of Mojo series and the column Business Mojo on Inc.com, Ariana guides individuals on a step-by-step path to achieve both success and happiness without sacrificing one for the other. Ariana was named Woman of the Year by the National Association of Professional Women and is an executive board member of the National Womens Political Caucus. More info on Ariana Ayu can be found at <http://www.Ayutopia.com>.

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gracie_Allen

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