

“Jesus Camp” directors share Oscar advice

By Calista Condo
Photo Editor

On Tuesday, April 10, Rowan University students got a chance to rub shoulders with two Oscar nominated directors. Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, directors and producers of “Jesus Camp,” visited Professor Ned Eckhardt’s documentary production class to discuss their films and to give students feedback on their documentaries. They then held a screening of “Jesus Camp” at the Broadway Theatre in Pitman at 7:30 p.m..

“Jesus Camp” is a documentary that follows three young Christian children, who have an extreme faith in God, to Pentecostal Pastor Becky Fischer’s “Kids on Fire Summer Camp.” In the film, Fischer voices that Christian children are the power that will turn America towards conservative Christian values. While at her camp the children are taught to be dedicated soldiers for God. Throughout the documentary, clips of Fischer preaching to the

children are interspersed with the children’s thoughts on what they are learning, the parents’ views of their children, emotional prayer and worship scenes, and a radio host’s view of evangelical Americans. The film is a look at how evangelical Christians teach and raise their children and how they feel this will have an effect on American politics, according to “Jesus Camp’s

friend of the two directors and employee of NFL films called Eckhardt, chair and professor of the Radio Television and Film Department and told him of their visit to the Broadway Theater. Eckhardt then contacted the two directors and had them come to his class from 12 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday. For two hours they showed students clips from two of their documentaries and discussed their film-making process. They spent the last two hours working with the students on their documentaries and giving them suggestions.

The students asked questions about what kind of equipment was used and how the directors pulled a story out of their collected footage. The students soon learned that these Oscar nominated film directors used the same cameras and editing software as them.

“It brought reality a little closer for the students,” said Eckhardt.

The class of 17 stu-

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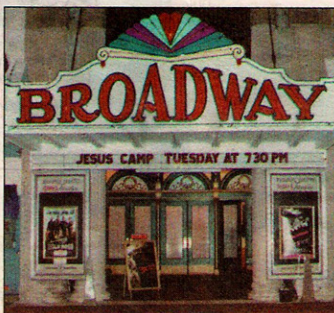


Photo by Calista Condo
The Broadway Theatre of Pitman hosted the Oscar nominated directors of “Jesus Camp” on April 10. The documentary follows three Christian children and their experiences with devout conservative values.

website, <http://www.jesuscampthemovie.com>.

Ewing and Grady’s visit to Rowan and Pitman was made possible by Rowan alumnus Jason Weber. The



A Midsummer Night's Dream

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Weather

Friday

Partly cloudy
High: 54
Low: 40

Saturday

Showers
High: 50
Low: 43

Sunday

Thunder
High: 48
Low: 40

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dents has been split into three groups, each shooting their own documentary; “Tiny Dancer,” which is about anorexia among ballet dancers, “Rink of Fire,” focusing on a women’s roller derby team based in Philadelphia, and “Blowing Smoke,” about marijuana and addiction. The students have about 90 percent of their documentaries shot, according to Eckhardt, so having the directors come on Tuesday was good timing.

“This was a special thing,” said Eckhardt. “They (Ewing and Grady) had tremendous passion for what they do. That passion definitely got over to the students and they realized that it was very important.”

After spending four hours with Rowan students, the directors went to the Pitman Broadway Theatre to show their movie and have a discussion with the audience. Grady and



Photo by Calista Condo
The directors of “Jesus Camp” Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady visited Ned Eckhardt’s documentary production class to discuss their films and offer feedback. The directors also attended a showing of their film at the Broadway Theatre of Pitman to field questions about the production.

Ewing, co-founders of a New York-based production company, Loki Films, explained the creation of “Jesus Camp” during the discussion with the Broadway theater audience.

“One film usually begets another film,” explained Ewing. The Boys of Baraka, Grady and Ewing’s first documentary about 12-year-old inner-city kids who ven-

ture to a boarding school, had a boy in it that wanted to be a preacher and would give sermons. The two women then proceeded to research children of extreme Christian faith and came across Fischer’s Web site.

“We were intrigued by her and her camp,” said Ewing.

According to the directors, their largest challenge

was remaining fair in their depiction of the children and the evangelical faith.

“One move, one sound bite could have tipped it one way or the other,” said Ewing.

“The unofficial litmus test to whether you were loyal to the truth and ethical in making a film is if the subject is willing to do another film,” said Grady.

They explained that Fischer was very happy with the movie and so were the children’s parents. One reason the two women felt they had success in remaining fair in their depiction was because they had no

preconceived notions and no expectations.

“We had very innocent questions,” said Ewing.

Grady, who is Jewish, and Ewing, who is Catholic, said there was a learning curve they had to go through to get used to the charismatic environment that they were in for several months. However, they always knew that they were there to work and their minds were on camera angles and getting the best footage.

“Later on when you look at the footage, that’s when you do the, ‘Wow! What was going on there?’” said Grady. “We

were aliens in their world.”

They also emphasized, when asked about Fischer’s motives, that Fischer was sincere and a true believer in her religion. She was not in ministry for money but was making a living through spreading her message.

The session ended with an audience member thanking the directors for making a balanced and fair film about people with faith.

“That’s our job,” responded Ewing. “We are story tellers. We are allowed into places because we are a vehicle to tell other people’s stories.”

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Contact News Editor Carly Romalino with story submissions, on-campus news, or story ideas at: CaptainCarly@gmail.com (856) 256-4888