Film Festival Podcast

[00:00:00] **Announcer:** Welcome to Connect Canyons, a podcast sponsored by Canyon School District. This is a show about what we teach, how we teach, and why we get up close and personal with some of the people who make our schools great students, teachers, principals, parents, and more. We meet national experts too. Learning is about making connections, so connect with.[00:01:00] [00:02:00]

[00:02:15] **Kirsten Stewart:** It's been said there's no business like show business and being that it's Oscar season, the major Motion picture awards show is coming up This weekend we thought we chat with the organizer of CSDs own version of the Oscars, the Canyons District Film Festival.

[00:02:30] **Kirsten Stewart:** I'm your Connect Canyons host, Kirsten Stewart here in the studio with the film festival's organizer. Justin Anderson, a former teacher in Ed Tech specialist who now works as a video and digital broadcast specialist with me in the communications department. And Jeff, who is also with us today.

[00:02:44] **Kirsten Stewart:** Jeff Haney CSDs, director of communications who in his spare time, of which he has very little moonlights as the co-host of Canyons Film Festival Awards ceremony. Welcome.

[00:02:55] **Jeff Haney:** Thank you, Kirsten. It's great to see you . Long time.

[00:02:59] **Kirsten Stewart:** Long time. No,

[00:02:59] **Jeff Haney:** [00:03:00] see. Yeah, we just walked down the hallway. . .

[00:03:03] **Kirsten Stewart:** Well, I can hardly believe this, honestly, that it is.

[00:03:06] **Kirsten Stewart:** This is the 14th year of the film festival. A chance for aspiring videographers to vie for bragging rights is the next up and coming. Spike Lee Martin Scorsese or Jane Campion? Pick your director. It's a firm tradition here in Canyons District. So, Justin, Jeff, tell us what was the impetus for this and I mean, there must be an educational tent behind this kind of project-based learning.

[00:03:26] **Kirsten Stewart:** Yeah,

[00:03:27] **Justin Andersen:** so the film festival kind of started as one of those opportunities. We saw things going on in the classroom. . And as the district was new, it became obvious that we had some amazing filmmakers in the classrooms. And so the film festivals put together as an opportunity to, one, showcase the great work that, that our students and teachers are doing, but also provide an educational outlet for those project-based activities that teachers could implement in their classroom, and then move those things onto the film festival and give some recognition those, and to champion that.

[00:03:58] **Kirsten Stewart:** What did the students learn? And teachers [00:04:00] it's open to teachers

[00:04:00] **Justin Andersen:** and students, correct? Yeah, it's teachers and students, and it's really fun to see the things that we get submitted because it's a range of things. There's things that students do on their own time that are these more fun projects, and then there's actual ones that.

[00:04:14] **Justin Andersen:** Students do as part of a classroom activity. So an assignment that a teacher already does I can always tell, where in a curriculum a teacher's put something cuz we'll get 20 submissions about the lifecycle of a butterfly . And so it, it's great because it gives opportunity for students to choose how they want to portray that lifecycle of butterfly.

[00:04:33] **Justin Andersen:** Some of them do a paper, some of them draw a picture, some of them make an animation video and then submit those to the film festival. And so it. Those students choice in the classroom allows them to have that project based opportunity, that hands-on, real world experience. And we see a lot of them grow up through the years in the film festival being in it.

[00:04:50] **Justin Andersen:** And having done it for, I think six years now, myself, I've gotten to see students who submitted in elementary who are continuing to submit in high school. . [00:05:00]

[00:05:00] **Jeff Haney:** It's been so much fun to see the students progress through the years. I've been fortunate enough to be the mc of the award ceremony, and we make it much like the Oscars.

[00:05:09] **Jeff Haney:** We have the red carpet. The students are invited with their parents to come in for a nice celebration that is gala like, and the spotlights are shining. They get to come up on the stage if they win. And through the years we see students who start even in first grade submitting some entries and you see them again in the second and the third, the fourth, the fifth, even, all the way through their high school years.

[00:05:34] **Jeff Haney:** So this has been really fun as somebody who only gets to see the students on the night that they win. Start as a very young student and then progress through the years and continue to come back every year to the film festival to celebrate with us all of their work. Mm-hmm. And it progresses so well throughout the years.

[00:05:53] **Jeff Haney:** You can see how much they have added every year to the technique in

[00:05:58] **Kirsten Stewart:** filmmaking. Oh, that's neat. so it's [00:06:00] really like a cool way for everyone to flex their creative muscles and I'm sure they're learning all kinds of things. In some ways it's a way to deepen what they're learning already in the classroom and others.

[00:06:07] **Kirsten Stewart:** It's. . Hey, I wanna have fun with this. See? See what it's like to put together a short documentary. Yeah. But like to know that, it's taking root and some of these students are finding a new passion and purpose. Right?

[00:06:18] Right.

[00:06:19] **Justin Andersen:** Well, and it's, it's interdisciplinary as well. So you know, when you look at filmmaking, it's not just filmmaking getting a camera out.

[00:06:26] **Justin Andersen:** They've gotta know storytelling. They've gotta be able to write a script, they've gotta know how a story progresses. So they're using those ELA skills and then whatever the subject is, they're learning all of those things as well. They're learning how light works when they're filming

[00:06:38] **Justin Andersen:** and so you really see a lot of skills built up just in making a small film that they're learning and using in all of their classes and the information they're learning back into the film festival. That's

[00:06:49] **Kirsten Stewart:** really cool. Talk about the different submission categories. Have those evolved over the year, remained fairly static.

[00:06:54] **Kirsten Stewart:** What, what are the

[00:06:55] **Justin Andersen:** categories? Yeah, so film categories. There's a couple different ones we have the opportunity [00:07:00] for. There's the short films, documentaries, animation. PSA or public service announcement, newscast and then our teacher films. And throughout the years they've kind of grown over time. We started with just a few different categories and we saw that there was a lot of variety in depth out there with what the students were doing, and we wanted to make sure we honored, some of what they were doing in our classrooms.

[00:07:20] **Justin Andersen:** And so, With all of those, they all kind of provide different, , time limits and different subjects. Whereas , the short film is usually more creative, more story based, and the psa, is gonna be focused more on an issue or a topic that they're trying to get out, and represent.

[00:07:34] **Justin Andersen:** Another fun one with the animation category, they actually get to try out new skills. We see everything from animating with a computer to a kid with a cutout of a little, , paper person Wow. Doing stop Motion or Lego people.

[00:07:48] **Justin Andersen:** And so you're seeing a whole, breadth of things in that animation category,, that allows different things to shine as they grow up. .

[00:07:54] **Jeff Haney:** One of the submissions that I enjoy watching are the newscasts, you know, of course, you and I, [00:08:00] Kirsten came from the news industry before we.

[00:08:03] **Jeff Haney:** Here at the Canyon School District and it's so much fun to see the students. Go into those new studios and then approach their news stories and they build their story. They ask really good questions and find kind of their own character in front of the camera. Now, because I have that background in news, I enjoy watching the students reenact what they think news is like.

[00:08:30] **Jeff Haney:** They're fun to watch, but they're also really. . You see them and you get an idea immediately what the culture of that school is all about. And that's really helpful for us as the administration of the district to see what students think that is news at their school, and also the tone of what they think their school stands for.

[00:08:53] **Jeff Haney:** Those are my favorite submissions. That's interesting.

[00:08:55] **Kirsten Stewart:** I was just gonna ask, yeah. What are your favorite submissions news? What about for you, Justin?

[00:08:58] **Justin Andersen:** So for me, [00:09:00] I really enjoy the PSAs because. the topics that kids choose are just fascinating, and I think it's things adults don't think kids would do.

[00:09:09] **Justin Andersen:** Hmm we get a lot of no texting and no driving while texting ones that I think are really fun and the kids take them in a really creative way with the PSAs. It's not the simple, you know, Hey, this is bad for you. , they get really creative and have a lot of fun. And so I really like the PSAs and I like to see what the students think are important.

[00:09:27] **Justin Andersen:** If they've got a great film that they submit to a local city film festival, we also want it. They wrote something for reflections. We also want to honor them and so it, it's a great opportunity for them to get a big bang for their buck cuz it's a lot of work making these films.

[00:09:42] **Justin Andersen:** Yeah,

[00:09:42] **Kirsten Stewart:** I bet. So how short is the, are the short films, are we talking TikTok, Instagram, short.

[00:09:48] **Justin Andersen:** So some of the short films are like 12 seconds. Oh wow. You know? Oh, wow. Uh, so the, especially our animations, so animations have to be less than three minutes, but we're, a lot of kids get down to the life cycle of a butterfly in 20 [00:10:00] seconds.

[00:10:00] **Justin Andersen:** Wow. Impress. And so they can get pretty quick. Um, and then there's some that go on for quite some time. ,

[00:10:07] **Jeff Haney:** now if you come to the night where we announce the winners, , when the film festival kind of culminates into that red carpet gala where we celebrate all of the students who, who submitted all of their entries, but also announced the winners.

[00:10:22] **Jeff Haney:** You get to see those. Yeah. And that's. in my mind, the fun part of just coming, even if your child didn't submit, one of their pieces of work for consideration, I would encourage every family in the Canyon's District to come for that night. It's very fun. And also you get to see all of those entries, the winning ones, and there are times when I'm standing on stage watching those videos and I'm thinking my.

[00:10:50] **Jeff Haney:** That fifth grader is amazingly talented. They put together an animated short that literally stacks up against things that I've seen [00:11:00] while watching TV at night. Yeah. Yeah. So even if you don't have somebody in your family who has submitted something for consideration, we would ask, please come. Let's fill up the seats.

[00:11:10] **Jeff Haney:** Let's take a look at all of those works that our students have worked so hard

[00:11:15] **Kirsten Stewart:** on. Yeah. It really is, more than a war ceremony. It's, it's an event. Right. Yeah.

[00:11:18] **Justin Andersen:** No, I think that's, it's a showcase of their hard work and the kids love to see their video up on the big screen, I bet.

[00:11:24] **Justin Andersen:** I mean, they're in the nice dark auditorium and the right as big as it can be their face. And they, they love that and they love to be able to come up, get their picture. , and have a lot of fun. And it's really fun, uh, to have the newscast come in because usually it's groups of students, right? A classroom or so.

[00:11:40] **Justin Andersen:** And so you see a group of 15, 20 kids who come up and they're just so excited. They're, , high fiving each other and they're high fiving the other team who maybe didn't win the first place, but they were nominated. So they're there as well. And it's just a lot of fun camaraderie

[00:11:53] **Kirsten Stewart:** that. . Well, remind us again, when is that?

[00:11:55] **Kirsten Stewart:** This year, what's the date

[00:11:56] **Justin Andersen:** for that? So the film festival is on April 27th [00:12:00] at Alta High School., it starts at 6:00 PM Okay. And so it's gonna be a great night of just kinda. Watching some great videos, rewarding our film festival champions, and really just having a great night. It's free open

[00:12:12] **Kirsten Stewart:** to the public, no registration.

[00:12:13] **Jeff Haney:** It's, yeah, no, you just show up to show up. And Alta High's new performing arts center. You can't think of a better way to spend an evening. That is one of the nicest theaters that I think I've ever been in, and it certainly is fantastic for a high school and for a school district. It's gonna be very, For the students who are announced as winners and they get to come up on stage.

[00:12:32] **Jeff Haney:** But if you're looking for that night for your family, to spend just maybe an hour and a half away from home watching student film and, seeing what our students can do in an amazing theater here in our own hometown, then I would encourage you to come. Yeah.

[00:12:49] **Jeff Haney:** And you know, Kirsten, one of the things that I found most fascinating over the years that I've been the host is watching the. in how the students get their footage.

[00:12:59] **Jeff Haney:** You [00:13:00] don't have to have specialized equipment anymore. Mm-hmm. , mom and dads don't need to drop a lot of cash on pieces of equipment that students would use to create their films. You can use your phone. . Yeah. And that I think has been a game changer for so many students who thought that they couldn't participate cuz they didn't have the equipment or they had to go to a special place at the district or the school to get the equipment.

[00:13:23] **Jeff Haney:** Now they just hold out their phones and they shoot their film and it's the editing software. These days is intuitive and this Yeah, you can even edit on your phone, right? Yeah, you can. Yeah. And and we have a lot of students. We have a lot to do that. Yeah. And they're so creative, they're very organic and it's from their perspective.

[00:13:41] **Jeff Haney:** And that's been interesting to see and changed throughout the years in the submissions

[00:13:45] **Justin Andersen:** we've received. Yeah. And it really has supported teachers as well. Because. Students are number one, focused in making sure that that learning continues with this. We provide training and support for teachers as well.

[00:13:56] **Justin Andersen:** So teachers reach out, and we go into their classrooms and help them [00:14:00] learn, these filmmaking tips, how to put it into their curriculum, how to teach it as a part of what they're already doing in their classroom,

[00:14:06] **Justin Andersen:** kids have these opportunities , and it's so much easier for them to make and create really cool things. We see some great stuff that night. I bet. I bet.

[00:14:14] **Kirsten Stewart:** Well, so I imagine it's pretty popular and probably competitive, right? How many submissions are we talking about a year?

[00:14:20] **Justin Andersen:** Yes. So it's very competitive.

[00:14:22] **Justin Andersen:** So we usually have somewhere around 300 to 400 submissions every year. Wow. Of films and so it. Crazy. The judging gets a lot, which makes things exciting. But there's a lot of opportunities for competition because we have it broken up, not only in the categories, but then we break it down by grade levels.

[00:14:39] **Justin Andersen:** Okay? So that there's an elementary, a middle, and a high school winner. So, , you have a lot of opportunity.

[00:14:44] **Kirsten Stewart:** And we haven't talked much about another element to this, which is the poster contest.

[00:14:49] **Kirsten Stewart:** We, I love those posters. We have 'em hanging here in the district office, right? To showcase the work of our artists.

[00:14:55] **Justin Andersen:** The poster contest, I think is my favorite thing, and it all kind of came out from.[00:15:00] . We were creating a poster every year and we were like, we need more student involvement here.

[00:15:04] **Justin Andersen:** We want more students. And so we add , the poster contest and said, okay, here's what it should have, do something. And we get the most crazy cool submissions from students, that wouldn't necessarily want to submit a video, but they still can participate through this. And so a lot of our, teachers, , are participating in this as a class activity.

[00:15:22] **Justin Andersen:** They have their students make one and submit one to us, . And it's really fun to see how kids interpret the film festival. And if you walk by the district office wall, it varies so much

[00:15:32] **Justin Andersen:** Think the most important thing for people to realize is you can still submit. It's not too late if you haven't started your movie yet, this is the perfect time to do so.

[00:15:40] **Justin Andersen:** So entries are due April 11th. So we're about a month out from, , the time this gets published, and that's. Just enough time for you to get something made and get something submitted. You can learn more at film festival dot canyons district.org. That's gonna be where all the information is to help you get submitted and get, , into the film festival.

[00:15:58] **Justin Andersen:** More excited to see it. [00:16:00] And does

[00:16:00] **Kirsten Stewart:** the poster contest have a different deadline or all the same? Okay. All the same. Okay. So the most important question of the afternoon, , how about your Oscar pics? What are your Oscar picks?

[00:16:12] **Jeff Haney:** You know, we are headed into the film festival season, as you know. That's right.

[00:16:15] **Jeff Haney:** Canyon School District has their own film festival. We'll find out who our quote unquote Oscar winners are, uh, in April. But, uh, when we tune into the Oscars on Sunday, you know, I, I don't think that this film will win, but it was my favorite. I love Top Gun Maverick. Oh yeah. It's such a good show. Good one.

[00:16:36] **Jeff Haney:** Fantastic sequel. And, , uh, you know, I, I have a problem watching movies. I get a little bit bored a little bit, and this one held my interest the entire time. Loved every single second of

[00:16:48] **Kirsten Stewart:** it. Interesting. Tom Cruz is not aged. . No. How is that possible? , no.

[00:16:52] **Justin Andersen:** Movie magic. Right? That's what we're gonna call it. Movie magic

[00:16:56] **Justin Andersen:** I think as, as we get in, um, I, I originally [00:17:00] thought that Brendan Frazier and the whale was going to really be the big one. But I watched just a couple weeks ago, everything everywhere, all at once. That's mine. I, I don't see how that can't, not especially because they have multiple people nominated in multiple categories.

[00:17:16] **Justin Andersen:** I just think that's gonna be the breakout. And it was great. I loved watching that show.

[00:17:21] **Justin Andersen:** Uh, Jamie Lee Curtis, I think was my favorite part, but oh three.

[00:17:25] **Jeff Haney:** For Jamie Lee Oriah. Fingers crossed that she walks away with the Academy Award. Yeah, that'd be

[00:17:30] **Kirsten Stewart:** amazing. That's my pick as well. , thanks for both of you for taking time outta your busy schedules to be here and chat.

[00:17:36] **Kirsten Stewart:** Of course. About an amazing project based learning opportunity for our

[00:17:39] **Jeff Haney:** students. Come to the film festival. You'll see us in our Texas. Yep.

[00:17:43] **Justin Andersen:** golden sparkly. All right.

[00:17:45] **Announcer:** [00:18:00] Thanks for listening to this episode of Connect Canyons. Connect with us on Twitter, Facebook, or I. At Canyons District or on our website, canyons district.org.