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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Release Date: September 15, 2008

**JUST IN:**  
**Winner of 2**  
**Emmys!**

**AUTISM:**  
**THE**  
**MUSICAL**

*"Eloquently attesting to the transformative power of theater, **Autism: The Musical** an upbeat docu about putting on a musical for, with and by autistic children, proves as riveting as it is revelatory."* □ *Variety*

**###Screeners are available for review/feature consideration###**

**New York, NY** – Hailed as “a marvelous new documentary” by *The New York Times*, **AUTISM: THE MUSICAL** is the inspirational foray into the lives of five children who demonstrate how the human spirit can rise to any challenge. The DVD of **AUTISM: THE MUSICAL** was released by Docurama Films to rave reviews on May 13, 2008 and is now the subject of much fanfare due to the film winning 2 Primetime Emmy® Awards.

Elaine Hall, creator of the Los Angeles based Miracle Project leads Neal, Lexi, Henry, Adam and Wyatt on an innovative journey through an exciting theater program that brings together typically developing children and children with special needs in an atmosphere of creativity, acceptance and joy as they prepare and perform their own full-length musical. Hall (or “Coach E” as the kids call her), is charged with the daunting task of proving that the five can sing, dance and act live in a stage performance in just 22 weeks.

**AUTISM: THE MUSICAL** is the story of this emotional adventure and features indelible character studies of Neal, Lexi, Henry, Adam and Wyatt - five kids who have been diagnosed with varying degrees of autism. These five experience failure, frustration and triumph – both on stage and in their home lives while preparing for opening night. Director Tricia Regan provides an intimate and unvarnished chronicle covering six months in the lives of both the kids and their parents. Both therapeutic and recreational, we see how the creative process provides a key to unlocking the inner worlds of these amazing children. The documentary charts this emotional journey, both on and off stage, and brings attention to a modern-day epidemic now of epic proportions - all the while celebrating the power of the connection between art and the human spirit and how together they can form a powerful tool against life's obstacles.

**About the Miracle Project**

The Miracle Project is an innovative and exciting musical theater program that brings together typically developing children and children with special needs in an atmosphere of creativity, acceptance and joy.

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The Miracle Project was created by Elaine Hall, founder of Kids On Stage, Inc., as a theater and video arts program which emphasizes creativity, self expression and social consciousness. Elaine is the mother of a child diagnosed with autism, the founder of Special Kids Productions, which uses creativity and joy to bring out the best in all children and has written and directed over thirty children's plays.

### Featured Players:

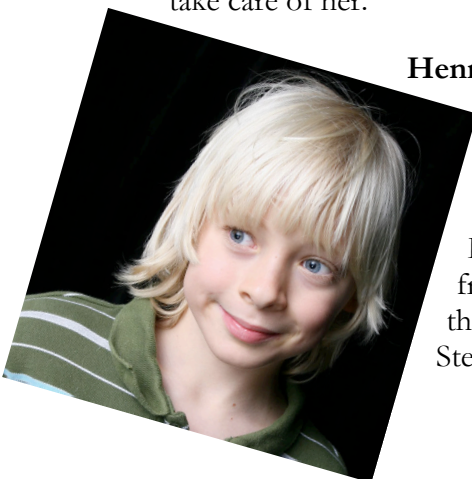


**Elaine Hall** – “Coach E,” the founder of The Miracle Project, is an educator, writer, consultant, performer, and professional acting coach for TV and film; she has written and directed over 30 children's plays. She is the mother of Neal, diagnosed as autistic after adoption. When traditional therapies did not help Neal, she sought out creative people (actors, writers, musicians), to work with her son. She developed new methods to reach autistic children, which resulted in The Miracle Project. Hall now coaches both typical and “special” children with relationship, self-esteem and self-confidence issues, as well as children and young adults seeking professional careers in entertainment. Most recently, she was the children's acting coach

on the feature film “Akeelah and the Bee.” Her unique, positive relationship-building approach to children's arts education has been featured in many documentaries and publications. She has served as a drama coach for Wildwood School, UCLA Bruin Kids, Pressman Academy, Walt Disney Studios, Universal Studios, ABC Television and Nickelodeon. (Elaine is pictured with her son Neal).

**Neal** (age 12) – Elaine Hall and her ex-husband adopted Neal from an orphanage in Russia when he was two. Soon after, Neal began exhibiting signs of severe autism, which put a strain on the marriage. Since her divorce, Elaine has raised Neal on her own. He has trouble saying words, and sometimes acts out in frustration. When Elaine finally decided she was ready to date again, she immediately met Jeff, her fiancé. “After being divorced,” she recalls, “as a single mom with a child with autism, I never thought that I would get married again.” Now, with Neal's blessing, she is about to do so.

**Lexi** (14) and her parents, Hillary and Joe – Lexi's autism has been hard for her mother to understand, and though Hillary and Joe have tried counseling, the couple recently separated. Admits Hillary, “I've tortured myself over the years thinking that in order to fully love her and parent her, I needed to be able to understand her head.” Lexi has enormous trouble generating her own speech; instead she repeats or mimics what other people say to her. She has a beautiful smile and a lovely singing voice, but her parents worry what will become of her when they are not around to take care of her.



**Henry** (10) and his parents, Kristin and Stephen – According to his mom, “Henry has Asperger syndrome, which is known as ‘high-functioning’ autism. Kids with Asperger tend to be gifted or highly intelligent in specific areas.” In Henry's case, he has a photographic memory for all things about reptiles and dinosaurs. Henry often retreats from other children, but he has actually made friends at The Miracle Project. However, he still finds it hard to take the bright lights and loud sounds of his dad's concerts – his father is Stephen Stills of Crosby, Stills & Nash.



**Adam** (9) and his parents Rosanne and Richard – Adam loves classical music, playing the cello and chasing pretty girls. Adam’s father Richard feels that his wife, Rosanne, has made Adam her whole world, abandoning a lot of the causes that made him originally fall in love with her. Rosanne’s feistiness can be bracing and disruptive at times, but she seems to have the right idea when it comes to finding acceptance for autistic children. “One thing I learned growing up with the Civil Rights movement,” says Rosanne, “is that it’s not just enough for you to be doing better. Your whole tribe has to do better, or else you really can’t do that much better.”

**Wyatt** (10) and his parents Diane and Greg – Wyatt seems more emotionally astute than some of the others kids, yet he was placed in a special-education class in school, which frustrates him. His parents try to hire a lawyer to argue his case for inclusion in normal classes, but exorbitant legal fees end their quest. Wyatt appears to be a victim of bullying in school, but he relished the experience when “Coach E” allows him to act like a bully in a Miracle Project exercise.



### **AUTISM: THE MUSICAL - DVD**

Pre-book date: April 29, 2008

Street date: May 13, 2008

Rating: n/a

Run Time: 138 mins. + extras

Sug. Retail Price: \$26.95

Format: DVD

Genre: Documentary

Catalog #: NNVG107861

Screeners: Avail. upon request

Color Art: Avail. upon request

AUTISM:THE MUSICAL was directed and filmed by Tricia Regan; produced by Perrin Chiles, Tricia Regan and Sasha Alpert; executive produced by Jonathan Murray, Joey Carson, Janet Grillo, David S. Glynn and Kristen Stills; edited by Kim Roberts; music composed y Mike Semple. For HBO: senior producer, Nancy Abraham; executive producer, Sheila Nevins.

### **About Docurama Films®**

In 1999, New Video launched Docurama Films, a line of over 200 award-winning and highly acclaimed documentary titles. Featured in the collection are Academy Award®-winning and nominated films including *Murder on a Sunday Morning*, *Marjoe*, *Sound and Fury*, and *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*, as well as documentary classics such as D.A. Pennebaker’s seminal work *Bob Dylan Dont Look Back* and *Genghis Blues*. Also included in the Docurama Films catalog are many titles of sociocultural relevance including *Hacking Democracy*, *A Crude Awakening*, and the 2008 Academy Award® nominee *Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience*. Docurama Films has also released theatrical cult hits including the fan-favorite *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill* and *Andy Goldsworthy: Rivers and Tides*. In 2007, Docurama Films had its first theatrical release with the critically acclaimed and hilarious *Air Guitar Nation*. In 2008, Docurama Films looks forward to releasing such titles as the theatrical standout *Gypsy Caravan* (featuring Johnny Depp), *Strange Culture* and the enormously entertaining and factually eye-opening *King Corn*.