

DaimlerChrysler Donates to Charities Honoring Gordon Parks

- Gordon Parks, award-winning photographer, writer and filmmaker, receives DaimlerChrysler "Behind the Lens" Award
- Award includes \$25,000 donation to Gordon Parks Elementary School in Kansas City, Missouri, and the Gordon Parks Academy in East Orange, New Jersey
- Hollywood turns out to celebrate Parks at "Behind the Lens" Award

March 11, 2003, Beverly Hills, Calif. -

Two public schools with curricula that focus on the arts, literature and photography, will benefit from the DaimlerChrysler "Behind the Lens" Award that was presented this week to noted photographer and filmmaker Gordon Parks. Parks received the award in recognition of his significant contributions behind the scenes in the entertainment industry.

The award included a \$25,000 donation from the DaimlerChrysler Corporation Fund that will be shared by two schools named in honor of the legendary artist: The Gordon Parks Elementary School in Kansas City, Missouri, and Gordon Parks Academy in East Orange, New Jersey. Both schools exemplify Parks' passion for teaching and learning.

"I am very grateful to DaimlerChrysler to receive the 'Behind the Lens' Award," said Parks from his home in New York. "It is high on my list of achievements."

The "Behind the Lens" Award was created in 2002 by DaimlerChrysler to recognize and celebrate the outstanding achievements of individuals who work behind the scenes in the entertainment industry. Award recipients are chosen by an advisory panel of entertainment professionals.

"This award celebrates the trailblazers that we don't often see, but whose contributions are impacting practically every segment of the entertainment industry," said Frank Fountain, Chrysler Group Senior Vice President – Government Affairs and President of the DaimlerChrysler Corporation Fund.

Fountain compared the 'behind the lens' professionals to individuals working in the automotive industry. "At DaimlerChrysler, we feel a real closeness to the concept of this award because, as in film and television, we are fortunate to have the contributions of so many incredibly talented people — engineers, accountants, production workers and so many more — whom the public rarely gets an opportunity to see."

During pre-taped acceptance remarks, Parks offered a message to filmmakers. "I would like to say to the young directors and filmmakers, you are doing a great job and continue to do so ... don't let anyone tell you different, no matter their position in the studio. I did it my way and I've enjoyed success that I can appreciate."

Parks, 90, boasts several "firsts" in his career. He was the first African-American to write, direct and produce a film for a major motion picture company. The film "The Learning Tree" was among 25 films placed on the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress in 1989. Parks' place in film history was further solidified when he directed the hit movie Shaft in 1971.

Parks also published 12 books, including three autobiographies. He composed orchestral music and film scores and wrote a ballet about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was the first African-American photographer to work at LIFE and Vogue magazines.

During the awards program, the audience viewed excerpts from the HBO documentary "Half Past Autumn" about Parks' life and career. A live celebrity panel followed featuring Richard Roundtree, Sheila Frazier, Art Evans, Ernie

Hudson and Roger E. Mosley. The actors discussed Parks' influence on their individual careers, as well as his impact on their performances in films ranging from "The Learning Tree" to "Shaft" and "Superfly."

Parks did not attend the ceremony due to his health. However, stage, film and television actor Avery Brooks accepted the "Behind the Lens" award on his behalf. Also, international recording artist Natalie Cole's musical tribute to Parks, "I'm Glad There Is You," brought the audience of nearly 400 to its feet.

Chrysler Brand Sponsorship of NAACP Image Awards

In conjunction with the "Behind the Lens" Award ceremony, DaimlerChrysler also sponsored the taping of the 34th Annual NAACP Image Awards, which will air Thursday, March 13, on the FOX network. The Image Awards honors individuals who have contributed to the positive portrayal of African-Americans and other minorities in the entertainment industry.

For the past several years, DaimlerChrysler has been a major sponsor of the Image Awards. However, this year marks the first time that the Chrysler brand was named as a co-national sponsor. The event provided a platform to showcase Chrysler products, such as the Sebring, PT Cruiser and the all-new Chrysler Pacifica.

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