

With various acting and scriptwriting credits to his name, Algonquin professor Rick Kaulbars can now add television star to his long list of accomplishments.

This past summer, Kaulbars, with the help of Ottawa-based charitable organization LiveWorkPlay, wrote and starred in a 30 second public service announcement which ran on 'A' channel this past summer.

The 30 second short, which was designed to educate the public about the need for equal treatment of people with intellectual disabilities, has, since its air date this past June, received a positive response from the public.

"We've had a lot of people say that they really like [it]," said Keenan Wellar, CEO of the LiveWorkPlay organization, "[The response has been] 98 per cent positive," said Wellar.

Kaulbars, who is no stranger to writing scripts himself, was largely influenced by a series of oblivious commercials by beer giant Molson Canadian.

The one minute ad, which features Jason Jones of the Daily show shouting out crude comments while remaining completely oblivious to all things and people around him, was the driving force behind the 30 second PSA.

"[We were] Looking at different advertising campaigns and thought of the Molson Canadian ads," said Wellar. "[We] needed something to help the public see that there are a lot of ignorant views and [it had to be done] in a quick way, 30 seconds to a minute," he said.

The underlying message of the PSA, according to Wellar, is to show the public that they need to be more aware of their attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities.

"That's what the self advocacy movement is all about. It's saying that a person has to be given the power of making the choices and it's everyone's job to find ways to communicate with them so that they can understand the choices that they are making," said Wellar.

Since adopting its self advocacy movement in 2003-2004, the LiveWorkPlay organization, has produced many in-house videos designed to help people with intellectual disabilities learn to do things for themselves. Feeling the need, however to expand their message beyond the intellectually disabled community, the LiveWorkPlay organization, with funding from the Community Foundation of Ottawa, Affinity Productions and the 'A' channel produced the 30 second short that's been running on the 'A' since early June.

"We've been working with [LiveWorkPlay organization] for so many years," said Peter Monet, Creative Service Director at 'A' television. "They're a great organization and we support them," he added.

Kaulbars, along with Jennifer Harris, a participant at the LiveWorkPlay organization are the only two people in the PSA with speaking parts. Harris, who provides the closing line at the end of the 30 second short, is very proud of her involvement in the PSA and hopes that it will ultimately change peoples' attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities.

"People with disabilities deserve a chance," said Harris. "We want to be included in the community not excluded."

"That's what we wanted [with the P.S.A.], we [didn't] want it [to be an] instantly appreciated message, we wanted it to inspire some thinking," said Wellar.