

News Release

Education Information Services ■ 125 South Webster Street ■ P.O. Box 7841 ■ Madison, WI 53707-7841 ■ (608) 266-3559

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI-NR 2016-34

Tuesday, March 1, 2016

Contact: Tom McCarthy, DPI Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

Mark Samels to receive Distinguished Public School Graduate Award

MADISON — Mark Samels, a 1973 graduate of Shawano High School and executive producer of television's most-watched and longest-running history series, *American Experience*, will receive the 2015-16 State Superintendent's Distinguished Public School Graduate Award on March 14 in Madison.

"Mark Samels is yet another example of the impact of quality teaching and learning that have been the hallmarks of Wisconsin's public education system," said State Superintendent Tony Evers. "For more than a dozen years, Samels has led numerous teams of documentary filmmakers as they chronicled America's history."

Evers will present the Distinguished Public School Graduate Award during a reception at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center for Wisconsin Title I Schools of Recognition. The reception precedes the noon awards ceremony in the State Capitol rotunda.

A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Samels launched his filmmaking career as a student with his documentary about hearing-impaired children. His work in Wisconsin, Texas, and Boston has told the stories of a small town's move away from a perennially flooding river, minority youth, and individuals from outside the mainstream. The premier of his film history, *West Virginia*, broke all audience records for a public television program in Virginia and was incorporated into the curriculum of schools throughout the Appalachian region.

Since he became executive producer of the *American Experience* in 2003, Samels has overseen the production of more than 50 films for the series. Under his leadership, *American Experience* has been honored with nearly every television industry award, including the Peabody, Primetime Emmys, the DuPont-Columbia Journalism, Writers Guild, Oscar nominations, Sundance Film Festival Audience and Grand Jury, and the Eric Barnouw from the Organization of American Historians.

In addition to his public television work, Samels is a founding member of the International Documentary Association and has served on the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Nonfiction Peer Group. He and his wife, photographer Debra Carbarnes, and their two children are all public school graduates.

Samels is the third recipient of the State Superintendent's Wisconsin Public School Graduate Award; prior recipients were author Michael Perry (New Auburn High School, 1983) and social work pioneer Ada Deer (Shawano High School, 1953).

###