

A student videographer saw colors for the first time on live TV. Now, he's getting national cred

October 2 2019, by Anna Orso

Jake Loburak usually sits in the control room. It's where the Neumann University sophomore prefers to be while his fellow students are on camera once a week for the Delaware County school's live television news update.

But one Friday in December, Loburak's peers at Neumann Media asked him to work on the set, and at the end of their broadcast, they pulled him on camera and handed him a set of EnChroma eyeglasses. Loburak is colorblind, and the glasses, which his classmates had fund-raised hundreds of dollars to buy, turned his sight from hues of brown to vibrant reds, greens, and blues.

"Whoa, that is actually so dope," the 19-year-old said on camera, slipping the glasses on and off and staring at the colors of a bouquet of balloons in the studio. "That's green, yellow, orange, and red. That's so ... that's so weird."

Not only was it a life-changing moment for Loburak and the students who witnessed his reaction in person, but the group of communications students also knew: It was darn good TV.

So this spring, Loburak and another student coproduced a 90-second follow-up video featuring the chills-inducing moment and explaining Loburak's condition. Others took notice. That video, titled "Jake

Loburak: The Colorblind Videographer," is now one of four national finalists for College Broadcasters' Best Feature News Reporting award. At the end of October, the students will accept the nomination on behalf of Neumann University—a private Catholic liberal arts college in Aston that has just 2,000 undergrads—alongside much larger schools like Temple University, Georgia State, University of Texas, and University of Wisconsin.

"I feel like they believe they're the underdogs," said Neumann Media director Sean McDonald, "and they feel like they have more to prove. They stick together, and they are as thick as thieves."

Loburak was diagnosed with strong deutan colorblindness—a disorder that makes reds, yellows, and greens appear brown—in early grade school, but he knew his sight was off even before then. His grandfather was colorblind, and he spent most of his younger years drawing brown grass in art class. "If the crayon didn't have a label," he said, "I didn't use it."

The condition was just a fact of life and something he dealt with through humor. Over the years, Loburak learned he most frequently mixes up blue and purple, and now, when he perceives something as blue, he mentally flips it to purple, almost without a second thought.

Through high school, he knew he wanted to get into broadcasting and production. While attending North Penn High, he won three high school Emmys, and McDonald said he came to Neumann ready to work, even taking part in a project on move-in day of his freshman year. Today, Loburak is a communications and [digital media](#) major, and though the colorblindness can make things challenging during post-production requiring color-correcting, his Neumann Media colleagues step in to help. Other than that, his condition hasn't stopped him from working behind the scenes.

McDonald had heard about glasses that alleviate the symptoms of colorblindness (Ellen DeGeneres has on several occasions gifted them on-air). The EnChroma glasses, first for sale in 2012, use technology that increases the contrast between red and green signals, helping the wearer better perceive those colors. But they retail for hundreds of dollars, so McDonald asked other students in Neumann Media to consider donating what they could, thinking he'd end up covering a couple hundred bucks on his own.

The students ended up raising beyond the \$500 they needed to purchase the glasses. All that was left to do was give them to Loburak and wait for his reaction.

"What we got out of him was pure shock," said senior Sean Spence, who coproduced the 90-second video this spring with Loburak. "You could see in his eyes, like, 'This is what you guys have been telling me about.' "

Loburak said he keeps the glasses with him at all times, slipping them on when needed. They helped him grow closer with his classmates at Neumann and reinforced that his colorblindness doesn't have to get in the way of his passion for videography—or everyday life.

"There's times I go to school or class and my shirt doesn't match my pants or something, but in college that's not a big deal," he joked. "At the end of the day, everyone has a weakness here and there. It's not about the weakness. It's about how you handle it and how you can show your strength through that."

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