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Friday, September 25, 2009 Last modified: *Wednesday, September 23, 2009 3:21 PM PDT*

Teenager who lost both parents from AIDS tells of finding family again in short film 'Mozambique'

"Mozambique," one of ten finalists in the Manhattan Short Film Festival, and the nine other film finalists will be screened from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, September 24th at Writers' Boot Camp at Bergamot Station, 2519 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica.

Mozambican teenager Alcides Soares, who lost both parents to AIDS, tells the story of finding family again in his 17-minute short film "Mozambique."

A small selection from the Venice Arts' project The House Is Small But The Welcome Is Big:

Photographs by Mozambican Children Orphaned by AIDS, will also be on display and available for sale at the screening, with proceeds going to support Venice Arts' ongoing photo program in Mozambique.

Shot in 2007, Alcides' compelling and moving story is not his, alone — it represents the stories of the more than 500,000 children who, according to the United Nations, have been orphaned by AIDS in Mozambique, a Venice Arts spokesperson says.

Alcides was identified as a naturally gifted storyteller from the group of 18 children working

with Venice Arts to tell their stories through photography. "Mozambique" incorporates many of the photographs taken by the other children in the project, images that are tragic and hopeful, lively and compelling, according to Venice Arts.

Alcides was mentored by award-winning filmmaker Chris Zalla and by Venice Arts' board member and a co-creator of The House Is Small, Dr. Neal Baer, executive producer of "Law & Order: SVU."

"Mozambique gives voice not only to the plight of AIDS orphans, but also to one young man's dreams of overcoming this terrible pandemic," Baer said.

"These children have a lot to say about living on their own and

raising younger siblings by themselves. The harsh truth is that millions of children are growing up alone, a generation without the guidance or love of parents."

Support for the project was provided, in part, by stars of Baer's television show, including Mariska Hargitay, Chris Meloni, and Dann Florek, as well as by his writers. The film was edited with the support of Dick Wolf and NBC/Universal.

A longer version, "Home Is Where You Find It", has already won numerous awards, according to Venice Arts.