

# Insightful Visionaries Awards Top 5 National Blind Idol Semi-Finalists

*The 3rd Annual Blind Idol Semi-Finals was hosted and organized by Insightful Visionaries at the Raleigh Renaissance North Hills Hotel.*

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, UNITED STATES, June 19, 2017

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Over 400

Supporters filled the ballroom as

[Insightful Visionaries](#), founded by

Carolyn Marshall Covington hosted the

2017 Blind Idol Singing Competition, at

the Raleigh Renaissance Hotel, on

Saturday, June 3, 2017. The evening

was presented by Insightful Visionaries,

an Amazing team of individuals to raise

awareness of the blind and visually

impaired and encourage people to support an under-served community.



In addition to the Idol Competition, the evening was highlighted by a welcome reception at 4pm featuring casino games, live entertainment, and paparazzi, followed by the Visionary Honors Dinner, paying tribute to Medical and Technology professionals who have made notable contributions to the BVI (blind / visually impaired) community. The 2017 BVI Champion Visionary Honors Award (Community member who is driving change and improvements for BVI individuals and/or groups) was presented by Cynthia Speight, Director, Division of Services for The Blind to Honoree Diane B. Whitaker, OD, Duke Eye Center. The Keynote Speaker and Honoree, Ed Summers, Software Accessibility Specialist, SAS was the recipient of the 2017 BVI Leader Visionary Honors Award (Paving the way for the BVI community with tools and accessibility to compete on the main stream employment circuit). The Visionary Excellence Award was presented to 16-year-old Guest Artist Matthew Whitaker, for his musical talents and for being an inspiration to all. Carolyn says to Matthew "No matter what twists and turns life puts in your path, you are a shining star. Please continue to let your light shine so that other may follow."

It was standing room only at 6 p.m. for The Blind Idol Semi-finals, a production of McMillian Entertainment. Engaged by Insightful Visionaries, Jaisun McMillian has assumed the dual role of producer and mentor to the contestants. "I am inspired by their determination and obvious passion for music and performing". As a veteran of the industry, she is a professional vocalist, playwright, and published author. "I am fortunate to work with a technical team of seasoned professionals in the person of Victor Stone, photographer and videographer, and Mike Brown, Sound and Lighting and Rhonda Hicks of Amazing Grace Event Management."

Moderating the competition were Mr. James Benton, Community Employment Specialist for Raleigh District Office of NC Division of Service for the Blind and a board member of TRRS (Triangle Radio

Reading Service), and Mr. George Douglas, host, writer, producer of "Renaissance Fare" at WCPE-FM, the classical station and producer of the popular program, "A Minute for God". Mr. Douglas is the President of TRRS.

The judges panel included Richard Dunnagan, Musician, vocalist, Tre' Taylor, vocalist and broadcast professional on 95.3 FM of Columbia S.C., and Kristy Lee, M.S., C.G.C., a Certified Genetic Counselor and Associate Research Professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and Chapter President of The Foundation Fighting Blindness. The judges paid tribute to Carolyn Covington for organizing and sponsoring the event with a special vocal rendition of "The Wind Beneath My Wings".

Among the high-powered lineup of guest performers was Shane Dittmar, 2015 Blind Idol Winner, music educator and composer. The 2016 winner, 21-year-old vocalist and actress Charity Hampton of Rural Hall, NC., received a standing ovation for her performance of "The Girl in 14-G". The 15 contestants traveled to Raleigh with one purpose in mind, to win a shot at the Grand Prize. They hailed from Las Vegas, Delaware, Ohio, Utah, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. They kept the audience on their feet with an abundance of ovations and applause.

From Broadway musicals to original hip hop compositions, everyone was delightfully entertained. Insightful Visionaries sought out a special guest for the evening, which turned out to be the perfect fit, Matthew Whitaker, a national recording artist and teen piano prodigy, who just happens to be blind. Knowing that he would be an inspiration to the BVI community, Matthew was accompanied by a local ensemble, Pat Torain on Drums, and Ernie Donnadale on bass. The trio wowed the audience with a stellar performance. Matthew was also a recent guest on the Ellen Show (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1kC9-zleOQ>).

Each contestant in the semi-finals was awarded a certificate of participation, and the five semi-finalists received a trophy for their achievement. Insightful Visionaries and Carolyn Covington congratulates the five finalists: D'Meri - Dover, Delaware, Deandre Kellyman - Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Jordan Scheffer - Asheville, North Carolina, Mary Mikels - Raleigh, North Carolina, Michael Kendall Harris - Salt Lake City, Utah. Best of luck as you advance to Winston-Salem for the live Blind Idol Finale competition on August 12, 2017. The Blind Idol Finale winner will receive a Grand Prize package of \$1,000 cash, eight hours of recording time at a recording studio in Winston-Salem, N.C., and a professional headshot. The total prize package is valued at \$3,000. Much of the event was captured by media outlets, including Channel 11 News, VIP Lounge Radio Group, Triangle Radio Reading Service, and Journalist, Barry Saunders of The News and Observer. Mr. Saunders commented that "It was only later, while driving home, that I thought about the contestants' disability. As was everyone else there Saturday night, I was too focused on their abilities."

Insightful Visionaries was founded by Carolyn Marshall Covington, a 40-year veteran of the Beauty & Entertainment Industry, who has become visually impaired with Retinitis Pigmentosa. The mission of this federally authorized non-profit is to facilitate the independence of the blind and visually impaired community. The organization helps to provide equal employment opportunities, transportation assistance, training, counseling, beauty, personal grooming, and hygiene services to help build self-confidence. "We present events, activities, workshops, and resources to assist the blind and visually impaired community to maintain an independent lifestyle and participation in the mainstream community. In this case, we provided an opportunity to showcase their singing talents. We need sponsors and funding to continue providing these much-needed services. Please help us to help my BVI community," says Carolyn Marshall Covington. For sponsorship or to [donate](http://www.insightfulvisionaries.com) visit: <http://www.insightfulvisionaries.com>

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