

\$5 Is the New Pilot Season: Brainy Pixel's Community-Funded Animation Premiere for Families

A private animated debut blending action, faith, and family—powered by community support.

DECATUR, AL, UNITED STATES, January 31, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In an era of rising subscription costs and shrinking attention spans, a North Alabama animation studio is

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Michael Thoenes, Co-Founder/CEO

experimenting with a different way to launch family-friendly television—one that puts viewers in the driver's seat from the start.

Brainy Pixel Animation Studios is hosting a private premiere this weekend for Righteous Warriors, a short-form animated episode designed for middle schoolers and their parents. Rather than debuting the episode publicly or pitching a traditional pilot to a network, the studio is releasing it through a \$5 micro-membership community

called the Shine-A-Light Guild.

The model gives members early access to the episode, entry to a live aftershow with the creators, and a direct role in supporting what gets made next.

“\$5 members don't just watch early—they help decide what gets made,” the studio said in a statement. “We're testing a new kind of family TV pipeline.”

A Response to a Changing Media Landscape

The approach reflects broader shifts in the entertainment industry, where creators are increasingly looking for alternatives to costly, high-risk pilots and families are rethinking how many streaming services they are willing to pay for.

Instead of asking audiences to commit to another monthly subscription, Brainy Pixel's model focuses on low-cost participation and community backing. For the price of a soda, families gain access to exclusive content while helping fund future episodes and projects. “This isn't just a show launch—it's a proof of concept,” said Brannon Hollingsworth, Chief Creative Officer at Brainy Pixel. “We're exploring whether a community of families and supporters can help shape

what kinds of stories get made for kids.”

Old-School Animation With a Modern Purpose

Righteous Warriors uses hand-drawn, 2D animation inspired by classic action cartoons, combined with martial arts storytelling and biblical themes. The episode is aimed at viewers roughly ages 8 to 15—an age group that parents and educators often describe as underserved by meaningful, age-appropriate content.

The story focuses on courage, discipline, and resisting temptation, using Scripture as a narrative foundation rather than a sermon.

“The weapon of choice is God’s Word,” said producer and co-creator Charles Owens II, who also owns and operates a martial arts school. “If kids walk away remembering a verse or two and understanding how to apply it in real life, then we’ve done our job.” Owens said the martial arts framework was chosen intentionally as a way to engage kids visually and emotionally, while reinforcing biblical principles in a memorable way.

From Grassroots Idea to Premiere

The project began as a collaboration among creatives who shared a passion for animation, faith, and family storytelling. Early ideas were sketched informally, and the project grew through grassroots support from artists, churches, and individual backers rather than a traditional studio greenlight.

Animation, particularly hand-drawn 2D work, is labor-intensive and expensive, Hollingsworth said. But early feedback from industry professionals and streaming platforms suggested there was strong interest in the concept—if funding hurdles could be overcome.

“Animation isn’t cheap,” Hollingsworth said. “That’s why community support has been so critical in bringing this to life.”

A Premiere Designed as an Event

The private screening will take place Saturday at 6 p.m. Central Time, followed by a live aftershow featuring the creators, animators, and composer. The after show is intended to give families and supporters a behind-the-scenes look at how the episode was made and what might come next.

Organizers describe the event as a watch-party experience rather than passive viewing—an opportunity for families to gather, watch together, and then engage with the creators directly.



Brainy Pixel founders in conversation during the announcement of their new community-backed animation initiative, redefining how faith- and family-friendly stories are funded and released.

Looking Ahead

Brainy Pixel sees the Shine-A-Light Guild as more than a one-time experiment. The studio hopes the platform can become a sustainable way to develop and test new faith- and family-friendly projects, guided by audience interest rather than solely by studio executives. "We're not saying this replaces everything else," Hollingsworth said. "But it could become a meaningful pathway for stories that might otherwise struggle to get made."

Memberships for the premiere are available at <https://brainypixel.com/shine-a-light-guild>.

More about Brainy Pixel Animation Studios available at <https://brainypixel.com>.

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