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PGN, Local Company Stage Valentine's Video Contest



SUSAN COHEN-DICKLER AND JAN DICKLER

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Valentine's Day is about to get a little sweeter for one local couple.

PGN is teaming up with local production company PersonalCast Studios to offer a free, professionally edited "Love Story," showcasing personal interviews with the couple about their relationship. The Love Story is valued at \$599.

Interested couples should see entry information at the bottom of this story.

PersonalCast is the recent brainchild of husband-and-wife team Jan Dickler and Susan Cohen-Dickler, whose Banyan Productions produced such series as “Trading Spaces,” “Ambush Makeover” and “A Wedding Story.”

The couple, who lives in the Philly suburbs, said they found the reality-TV genre becoming increasingly contrived, prompting them to launch PersonalCast, which focuses on helping everyday people tell their authentic stories.

“We saw the content of reality TV getting, as Jan calls it, ‘loud’; the stories are more manipulated. We enjoy authentic reality and we knew those stories are still out there,” Cohen-Dickler said.

“Technology has come to the point where everyone has it in their hands,” Dickler added. “We started years ago with lots of heavy equipment, but now nearly everybody has a smart phone with a camera. So we thought using that idea is the next step in our journey of trying to focus on authentic reality.”

PersonalCast produces its interview-based videos using either Skype or FaceTime — an approach that opens the company up to an international client base and allows the subjects to be filmed where they feel most comfortable.

“When you’re on Skype or FaceTime with an interviewer, it’s just moments until the nervousness falls away and it’s like you’re just having a conversation with a friend,” Cohen-Dickler said. “People are surprised at how comfortable they become.”

Among its products is the Love Story, which fuses separate interviews with two people in a couple, who don’t see what their partners said until they get the finished product. The videos are produced in two half-hour sessions and then professionally edited, with photos and music suited to the couple’s tastes included.

“We call it PersonalCast because we’re not producing stories for a huge audience; it’s just for these people and their family and friends, people they want to share their story with,” Cohen-Dickler said. “We give them the TV-production value but it’s the truth of their own stories. It’s like their own TV episode to a degree but it’s very personal, in their own media and it’s a lived experience for them.”

PersonalCast has already finished a Love Story for a gay couple in Florida (<http://ow.ly/XeZFX>) and is in production on a story for a lesbian couple.

The company also offers options like the Life Story, a chronicle of one person’s life, the Short Story about a smaller moment and the True Story to allow loved ones to pay tribute to someone.

Dickler said that, while reactions to the finished products have been overwhelmingly positive, the subjects are often just as grateful for the interview process itself.

“The interview is almost like getting a massage because they’re just getting so much out there by having this comfortable conversation with a professional interviewer,” he said. “And it’s great for us because we know we’re capturing something that’s going to resonate down the road. If you look at your relationship and take a snapshot of it and then are able to look back and witness that in 10 or 20 years, that’s an amazing thing.”

PersonalCast will offer one free Love Story video to a reader of PGN and his or her partner. To enter, one person in the couple should answer the question, “At what moment did you know your partner was THE one for you?” Sappy, serious or funny — just tell us in fewer than 100 words why your love story deserves to be captured on this keepsake video. Email your statement to editor@epgn.com by midnight Feb. 7, and we’ll announce the winner just in time for Valentine’s Day. For more information on PersonalCast Studios, visit www.personalcaststudios.com.

