

## Animator wins international cartoon contest

By Dominik Kurek  
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

Twenty years ago Oakville's Dave Thomas stumbled upon an industry that he just hasn't been able to let go.

Now, the 44-year-old is still reaping the benefits of the animation industry he got into by chance.

Thomas received AUD \$20,000 (currently CAD \$18,762) from the Australian government for career development after winning the GRAPHIC online animation competition.

"When I first found out I was stunned."

He entered the international competition, organized by the Sydney Opera House and crown operated Screen NSW, with his short-film *Seven Year Twitch*.

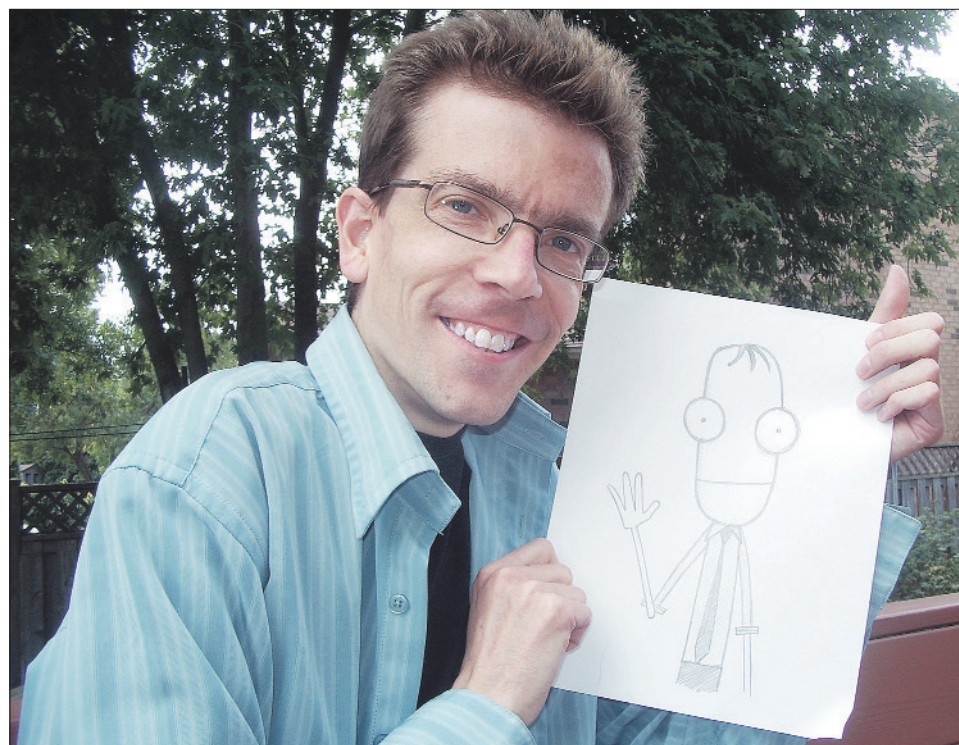
The film scored well among online voters and a professional jury and Thomas' work ended up beating the other four finalists, all of whom were Australian.

But Thomas only got into the animation industry by chance and stayed by choice. He went to Sheridan College for its media arts program. However, when he graduated he ended up getting a job with a commercial animation studio. That led to another job and another. And so the last 20 years of his life, Thomas has spent as an animator and an animation director.

"I kind of taught myself. I did some clay-mation while I was at the school, oddly enough not in the program, and then upon graduation my first job, ironically, was at a commercial animation house," he said.

"I learned a lot about the ins and outs of how it's organized and structured. All I've pretty much done since then is the animation industry. I kind of stumbled into it."

However, he's currently between jobs so the money he won in Australia last week will help him get re-established in the industry,



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**GO HAROLD:** Oakville animator Dave Thomas holds up a picture of his cartoon character Harold. The cartoon got him first place in an Australian animation competition and with the win Thomas received some money for career development.

through training, networking and upgrading his equipment.

Thomas also recently won Oakville's cartoon pitching contest at the For the Love of the Arts festival, run by Pipeline Studio Inc.

"Part of my strategy to get my name out there is to enter as many competitions as I can," he said.

The Australian contest required competitors to enter three 20-second animations that together formed a one-minute short cartoon film.

However, Thomas nearly missed the deadline to submit his first clip.

He had been working on one idea but

when it was not going as well as he had hoped, Thomas nearly gave up. With the Saturday morning deadline to submit his first clip looming, it was on Thursday night that his sister told him not to give up. It was she who suggested he use his Harold character that he had previously come up with.

"I actually gave up thinking I didn't have enough time, it's not going to work," he said. "I don't like quitting anything and jumped behind my character Harold. He was one of the possibilities for the competition. I quickly went to work Thursday night and worked straight through till, literally, 15 minutes to the deadline and I uploaded before the dead-

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Dave Thomas,  
Animator and animation director

line."

Harold is an office worker who begins to question the decisions he's made.

As part of the competition, Thomas had to do as much web-based social networking as possible to help him garner votes.

"I set up a Facebook page for the film and to go a couple steps further I set up a blog by the main character of the film, written by him. Then I set up a fake website of the company that the characters works in. So I really went full tilt to market the film," he said.

The competition attracted 75 entries from 13 countries include Australia, Belarus, Canada, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Italy, Nepal, New Zealand, Taiwan, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom and the United States. All forms of animation were accepted.

Thomas made a video of a classic drawn cartoon.

The initial round narrowed down the field to 20 through online voting. Then a jury selected the final 10, five and eventually the winner.

Thomas was notified of his win before the actual announcement and the competition organizers paid for his flight and a portion of his accommodations to Sydney.

Along with the money, Thomas also received an Adobe CS5 Master Collection, valued at more than \$4,000. The suite includes the latest animation software from Adobe.

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