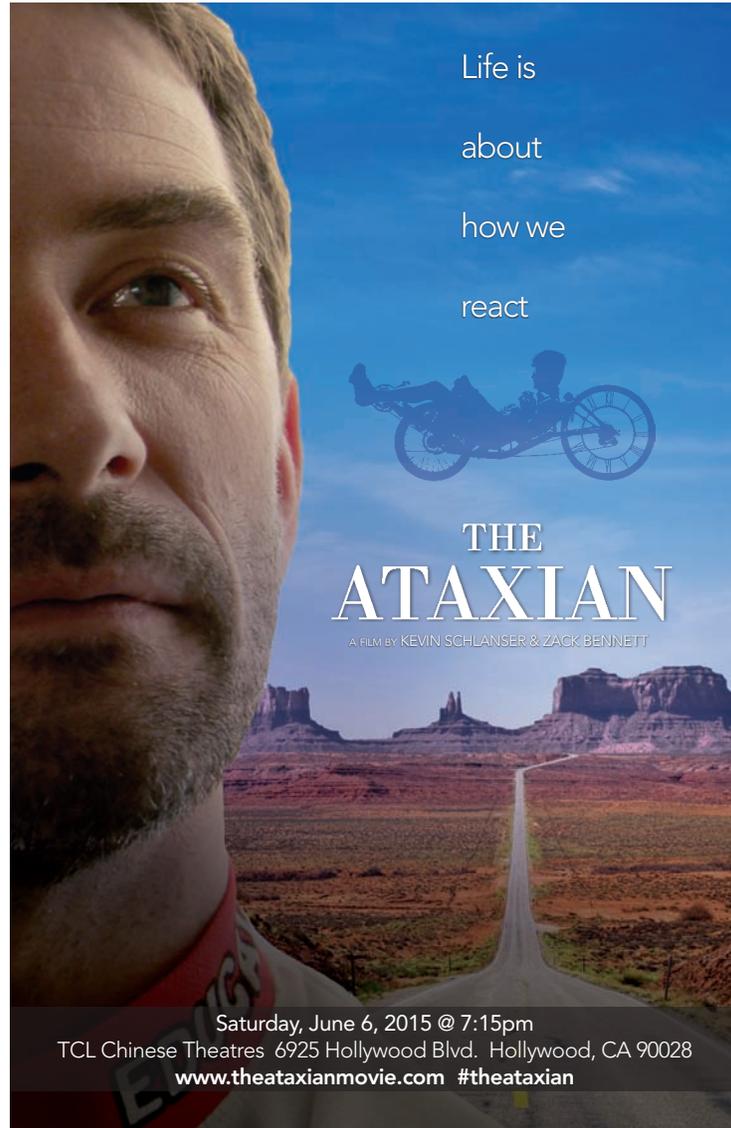


Redwood Creek Entertainment

Presents

“The Ataxian”

Production Notes



Life is About How We React

www.TheAtaxianMovie.com

#TheAtaxian

Running Time: 73 minutes
This film is not rated

PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION

Zack Bennett, Redwood Creek Entertainment
(818) 854-6045
zackbennett88@gmail.com

MEDIA

Heather Burgett, The Burgett Group
310.633.4801
heather@theburgettgroup.com

Relevant Links

For Press Only:

www.TheAtaxianMovie.com/press

Download press materials at this link, including video clips, stills, poster, press kit, etc.

Web:

www.TheAtaxianMovie.com

Trailer:

<https://vimeo.com/127990377>

EPK:

3-min video about "The Ataxian":

<https://vimeo.com/126855646>

Video Clips:

Kyle Bryant's Tedx Presentation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdQnKloyJkc>

Social Media

Twitter:

twitter.com/TheAtaxian or @TheAtaxian

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/theataxian>

HASH TAGS:

#TheAtaxian
#TheAtaxianReaction
#RideAllNight
#WhatWouldKyleDo
#DWF18



“The Ataxian” Directors’ Statement

“We’ve been friends since we were five years old; we grew up in the same small town and would make videos and short movies for fun. We both ended up working in the entertainment business in Los Angeles, but after a few years we had both become a bit disillusioned with our careers. On one drive back home to Northern California, we talked about how we knew we both wanted do something more meaningful.

It was after this conversation that we were presented with the opportunity to meet Kyle Bryant. We heard about this local guy from our hometown in Northern California who couldn’t walk due to a neuromuscular disease, but even so, he was about to ride a tricycle across the United States in the Race Across America! This was almost inconceivable to us, and we knew at that moment that this was a story that we were meant to tell.

Making this film was one of the hardest things each of us has ever done, but it has also been one of the most rewarding experiences of our lives.

Our hope is that anyone in this world that is faced with any sort of challenge or obstacle will watch ‘The Ataxian’ and be inspired by the knowledge that if Kyle can do what he is doing, anything is possible.”

- Kevin Schlanser and Zack Bennett



“The Ataxian” Short Synopsis

Unable to walk due to the neuromuscular disorder, **Friedreich's Ataxia (FA)**, **Kyle Bryant** and a team of friends attempt the most grueling bicycle race in the world, **The Race Across America (RAAM)**. The feature-length documentary, “**The Ataxian**,” spotlights a man whose will and determination carry him and his teammates across a continent under almost impossible conditions—an act that sparks others to take action in their own lives. Stunning cinematography exposes raw emotions juxtaposed against inspiring landscapes. With purity and grace, the film examines the life of a man aggressively living every moment to the fullest in a race against his own mortality.

“The Ataxian” Long Synopsis

How would you react to a debilitating and fatal illness? In “**The Ataxian**,” one man shows the world that it is possible to take action and find hope under even the most life threatening and daunting of circumstances.

At age 17, **Kyle Bryant** was diagnosed with the relatively unknown progressive neuromuscular disease, **Friedreich's Ataxia (FA)**, for which there is no medication, nor cure. As Kyle lost his ability to play his favorite sports and even walk, he began biking long distances in a specially outfitted “trike.”

When he is finally relegated to a wheel chair, Kyle decides that *enough is enough*. He enlists the help of three friends, **Sean**—who also has FA—**John** and **Mike**, and they embark on the “world's toughest bike race,” the **Race Across America (RAAM)**.

In this feature-length documentary, filmmakers and childhood friends, **Kevin Schlanser** and **Zack Bennett**, capture what is a grueling 9-day non-stop journey for anyone—much less someone with an energy-depriving affliction—that starts in Oceanside, CA, ending in Annapolis, MD. What happens along the way inspires hope in the hearts of other families battling FA and nurtures a movement, known as **rideATAXIA**.

Set to an incredible soundtrack featuring **Bon Iver**, **Sigur Ros**, **Belle Brigade**, and others, the audience accompanies Kyle and his relay bike team through magnificent sweeping landscapes and the unbreakable spirit of a life-changing cross-country trip that shows: *life is about how we react*.

“The Ataxian”
Q&A with Filmmakers Zack Bennett & Kevin Schlanser

About the Production

Q. What inspired the creation of this documentary?

Zack: *The story actually found us. Kevin and I have known each other since we were five years old. For years, we created our own videos and short movies. In 2009, we were at this place in our lives where we really wanted to put ourselves out there and find some material that spoke to us. We had been discussing how we wanted to create something meaningful on a long drive back to LA from our home town, and it was no more than a week after we had voiced that to the universe that Kevin received a phone call about Kyle—a guy that was about to do something that was almost incomprehensible. Kyle couldn’t walk but was about to bike across the country. There was zero hesitation on our part. This was the story we had asked to tell.*

Kevin: *I was introduced to Kyle through a family friend. She told me Kyle’s story and what he was dealing with and said he was planning to compete in the Race Across America. I was thoroughly intrigued and that night ended up watching a YouTube video of Kyle doing a video blog, in fact the same video that now opens the film. Watching the video I immediately felt Kyle’s presence, charisma and unyielding determination and it gave me chills. In that moment I knew I wanted to make a documentary about Kyle and the journey that lay ahead.*

Q. When did you start production?

Zack: *Kevin went back home to start filming in January 2010 for about 6 months, and by the time June came around, we started shooting in San Diego to capture Kyle and his relay teammates’ journey for the Race Across America.*

Q. How did the other cast members become involved?

Kevin: *Kyle enlisted the help of his friends, Sean, John and Mike to join him in The Race Across America.*

Q. What was the most challenging aspect in the making of this film?

Kevin: *The time it took to ensure that we had a finished film that we were proud of and that we felt could bring Kyle and the FA community the attention they need and deserve—all the while those with FA were progressing and some even passed away before the project was completed.*

Zack: *It actually was staying alive in the RV – otherwise known as the “Rainbow Fox.” It had so many technical issues, tires were cracking, it was leaking, and there were times when it went off the side of the road and we had to get a tow truck to pull us out in the rain. It was 35-feet long, and it was bananas. I got an ulcer in my right eye due to the stress of the entire production. The RV we had was the true antagonist of our story. Not Kyle’s story...but our story. The first narrative feature we do will be about us and our experience creating this movie. You can’t make this stuff up.*

Q. How long did it take to create this film?

Kevin: *Five years.*

Q. What type of cameras and technology have been enlisted in the creation of the film?

Zack and Kevin: *Anything we could get our hands on. Everything from the old Contour HD, the Sony CX150, Sony Z5U, Flipcams, C300 and C500. Probably 80% of the final product came from the Canon 7D—that was really our workhorse camera. We coupled two of those with Canon 24-105L Series lenses. That was basically all we had during the race. We edited in Final Cut Pro 7.*

Q. Are there any special or funny anecdotes from the road during filming that you can share?

Zack and Kevin: *Meet us at the bar after the screening.*

Q. What is the connection between Friedreich’s Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA) and this film?

Zack: *I suppose we’re talking micro/macro. Kyle’s story is, in certain ways, a microcosm, but we felt*

that in the most important ways it is a macrocosm. It's universally applicable. FARA is really a mirror to Kyle's story and in so many ways it IS his story. Spiritually they're sort of the same entity. You really can't talk about Kyle Bryant and not talk about the Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance. Point being, when we started to understand who Kyle was, we started to understand what FARA is. Other than being integral to Kyle's story, FARA doesn't have an inherent connection to the making of the movie. We have since become champions of their cause, but the film itself was really inspired by Kyle.

Kevin: When FARA was created by Ron Bartek and his wife Rachel, it was the first and only organization to dedicate itself to finding a treatment or a cure for FA. They created their own hope out of none, just as Kyle and Sean have done.

Q. Who are the other key members of the crew behind this film?

Zack: This haunts us; daily. The amount of people who are responsible for the success of this film is staggering. It's impossible for us to distinguish who was more integral or more key to the completion of this film. Sure, we could say the obvious people who've been around the longest, but what about that one guy who drove two and a half hours from Temecula to repair our RV at 2:30 a.m. because he believed in what we were doing? Or what about our friends who decided to stick around despite their lives being in danger? (Meaning the guys that drove the "Rainbow Fox.") There was definitely that one dude who delivered us six special order tires from San Diego within 4 hours—we wouldn't have been granted permission to even follow the team without them. Frankly, we can't even begin to fathom the slivers by which this movie succeeded. We can only humbly thank EVERYONE who was involved in any way, shape or form. We really want to thank everyone in the film that is struggling with FA that were willing to open up their lives to the camera and share their stories.

Kevin: There are many people without whose love and support this film would not be what it is today. That being said, **Jeff Litton** contributed greatly to helping capture some of our very first footage early on; and our primary crew who traveled across the country under near-insane conditions during RAAM were: **T. Anthony Moore** and **Gregory Boone** doing additional cinematography; and **Travis Edwards** and **Zach Matchem**, who tirelessly drove our production RV, the "Rainbow Fox," across the entire country in nine days in pursuit of Team FARA. After the filming of the race, **Sarah MacLean DeWitt** was instrumental in helping us edit the movie; and we were fortunate to have **Nathan Adams** join us as our post-production supervisor; **Sean Fernald** who secured many amazing songs as our music supervisor; and **Brandon Roberts** who composed a wonderful score.

Q. What makes you and Kevin Schlanser a unique writing/directing/producing team?

Zack: We're just happy to be here. Come check out the movie and decide for yourself. More importantly we think you should come check it out to see Kyle. Kyle is worth every second. The guy is truly a leader and an inspiration. He has dramatically altered the course of our lives both mentally and spiritually. We want nothing more than to introduce him to the world.

Kevin: Zack is an amazing producer and all around 'make things happen' kind of guy who also has the innate ability to tell a story in a concise and specific way. Whereas I think I have a tendency to try and create things that are more esoteric, but that's our balance. A lot of the times, I'll sort of head off in whatever direction I'm feeling at the moment, and then Zack comes in and does a really great job honing what makes the most sense with the overall arc and what we're trying to say.

Q. What other projects are coming up next?

Zack: We have a slate of 10 projects coming up – ranging from narrative shorts to features, web series and music videos that we're developing.

Q. What is the core message from the film that you hope audience's take away after seeing it?

Zack: We feel Wade Boggs really summed it up, "Our lives are not determined by what happens to us but how we react to what happens, not by what life brings us but the attitude we bring to life."

Kevin: There is always hope.



Zack Bennett and Kevin Schlanser behind-the-scenes on one of their collaborative projects.

“The Ataxian” Cast Biographies



The Ataxian – Kyle Bryant

Kyle Bryant is an athlete, keynote speaker and director of **rideATAXIA**, a bicycle fundraiser for the Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA). **rideATAXIA** currently has five locations nationwide and has raised over \$3 million for FA research since 2007. Despite his diagnosis of FA at the age of 17, Kyle has completed numerous long distance bike rides, including "The World's Toughest Bike Race," Race Across America (RAAM) in 2010 as part of 4-person team representing Team FARA. Team FARA's journey is the subject of "The Ataxian," a documentary film hosting its World Premiere on June 6th, at Dances with Films' 2015 annual festival in Los Angeles, CA. For more information on Kyle, please visit www.kyleabryant.com.



Sean Baumstark

Since appearing in “The Ataxian” as one of the 4-person relay team for Ride Across America, **Sean Baumstark**—who also has Friedreich's ataxia—has continued to develop a career with **Nugget Markets** in Northern California. In 2013 he launched **De:terminence, Inc.**, a non-profit organization committed to helping improve the quality of life for those jeopardized by disease or disorder through athleticism and physical achievement. He participates annually with a team of runners who compete in 30-hour 180-mile races. Sean is committed to *doing what he can, while he can, simply because he can*. As a favorite activity, Sean addresses audiences of all kinds, sharing his inspiring message of hope, and challenging his audiences to live beyond their circumstances.



John Lockwood

John Lockwood is an avid cyclist who enjoys spending time in his community. He is an alumni of the **Nehemiah Emerging Leaders Program**, and serves on the board of directors for the **Boys and Girls Club of Greater Sacramento** and **NextEd**, a Sacramento based non-profit whose mission is to prepare students for life after high school. Professionally, John is the Business Development Manager for **Rapid Brands**, a start-up company in Sacramento who helps entrepreneurs take their product ideas to market. Since riding for "The Ataxian," John has become passionate about cycling and helping others. John is engaged to be married and lives in East Sacramento.



Mike Mellott

After his ride for "The Ataxian," **Mike Mellott** went on to compete again in the 2011 Race Across America. He is now married to the crew chief **Ashley** from his second RAAM. He currently lives in Sacramento, where he is working as a manager for a home-builder. For he and his beautiful wife, the fun and adventure have never stopped, whether it's a mountain bike ride in Lake Tahoe or humanitarian trips to El Salvador, they don't plan on slowing down any time soon.



Ronald Bartek

Ron Bartek and his wife **Raychel** founded the **Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA)** in 1998 after their son **Keith** (pictured above) was diagnosed. At the time, there was no organization solely devoted to advancing research for FA. Along with other FA families and scientists, they created FARA to fund and facilitate research to slow, stop, reverse, and eventually cure FA. Sadly, Ron and Raychel lost Keith to FA in early 2010, but his legacy lives on in FARA's work. Ron has served as FARA's President since the organization was founded. He is a Board member of the **National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD)**; 4-year member, **NIH National Advisory Neurological Disorders and Stroke Council**, and former partner and president of a business and technology development, consulting, and government affairs firm. Ron's professional experience also includes twenty years of federal executive branch and legislative branch service in defense, foreign policy and intelligence, including six years on the Policy Staff of the **House Armed Services Committee**, four years at the **State Department's Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs** (including a year as a negotiator on the U.S. Delegation to the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty** talks in Geneva); six years as a **CIA** analyst of political-military aspects of the East-West balance (including a year as an **Intelligence Community** representative to the interagency groups charged with U.S. arms control policy), and a former Director, **American Friends of the Czech Republic**. Following graduation from the **United States Military Academy at West Point**, Ron spent four years as an Army officer, serving as a company commander in Korea and an Infantry and Military Intelligence officer in Vietnam. He has a Master's Degree in Russian Area Studies from **Georgetown University**.



Bob O'Neil

Bob O'Neil is from Wakefield, MA, and was moved to join Team FARA in the Race Across America because his daughter **Erin** (in photo above) was diagnosed with FA when she was 12 years old. Erin is now 35 and works full time at **Lahey Hospital and Medical Center** in Burlington, MA. Currently, Bob is enjoying retirement after 45 years as an electrician with the **IBEW Local 103 Boston**. He enjoys golf, reading, riding his motorcycle, and spending time with his large family.



The Helms Family

Jason and Jennifer Helms reside in Missoula, Montana with their son **Dylan** (age 13) and **Sienna** (age 8, soon to be 9 on June 21st). Both Dylan and Sienna have been diagnosed with Friedreich's ataxia. As a family, they love to travel, ride bikes, go camping and to the cabin, hang out with friends and family, watch Netflix, try new adaptive sports, go to the beach, be involved with roller derby, make movies, and watch Sienna's plays and softball games.

“The Ataxian” Filmmaker Biographies



ZACK BENNETT, WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Zack Bennett was born and raised in the small, rural mining town of Grass Valley, California. Having spent over a decade learning his craft and honing his skills, Bennett is incredibly excited for the future, and at 26 years of age, he is just getting started. He began performing on stage at the age of eight when his 3rd grade teacher decided that while his high energy and incredibly loud voice weren't great for the classroom, they'd be perfect for the stage. By the time the concept of careers came into Zack's mind, he had already been spending all of his free time on stage or making videos with his old Digital 8 camcorder. He taught himself how to edit on an early Final Cut system by the time he was a freshman in high school. It was clear from an early age that he was destined to make movies.

As soon as the first opportunity presented itself, Bennett lept into the unknown, graduating from high school early at the age of 16 and moving to Los Angeles for his first pilot season. Within 3 months, he had booked his first professional acting job, a commercial directed by industry titan **John Seale** (“**Rain Man**,” “**Dead Poets Society**,” “**Mad Max: Fury Road**”). After that, there was no turning back and Zack has been working professionally in Los Angeles for over 10 years. He has acted in dozens of feature films, short films, commercials and television. He has worked with a wide range of talent including **Faye Dunaway** (“**China Town**,” “**Network**”), **Ed Asner** (“**The Mary Tyler Moore Show**,” “**Up**”), **Rob Cohen** (“**The Fast and the Furious**”, “**Stealth**”), and many more. Zack has studied closely with world renowned acting coaches **D.W. Brown & Elaine Williams** at the **Joanne Baron/D.W. Brown Studio**; a studio that has produced names such as **Halle Berry**, **Robin Wright**, **Jeff Goldblum** and **Patrick Dempsey**.

Zack's turn into the vast realm behind the camera began when he and lifelong friend **Kevin Schlanser** decided to produce and direct their first feature together. The feature-length documentary would soon become known as “The Ataxian.” Just as with acting, Zack found himself enthralled in the world of production, and having spent thousands of hours learning the technical aspects of making films, he has since developed an impressive framework and even deeper love for the art form. His work and relationships have spanned world famous artists including **Hall of Fame** musician **Jason Newsted (Metallica)**, world class dancers including **Andrea Schermoly (Netherlands Dans Theatre)**, and **Ashley Boudier (New York City Ballet)**, and many other talented actors, musicians and artists.

Bennett conveys a tremendous sense of gratitude for the opportunities he's been given during his career. He owes a great deal to **Valerie McCaffrey** (“**American History X**,” “**Babe**,” “**Hard Candy**”) and **Sean Michael Beyer** (“**Down the P.C.H.**,” “**Poor Paul**”) for the tremendous roles in which they've played in his life both personally and professionally.



KEVIN SCHLANSER, WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

Kevin Schlanser was born on June 6, 1987 in Grass Valley, CA. He was introduced to film and photography at a young age by his father **David** and would later start saving money to begin buying his own video cameras. He later taught himself to edit, making short films with his brother **Kiel** and their friends. After high school, Kevin moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in film, attending the **New York Film Academy's** program for directing where he met actress **Jessica Rose** and began working on the YouTube sensation "**Lonelygirl15**," a subsequent spin-off, and then a web series accompaniment to "**Harper's Island**" on **CBS**. During this time, he also directed "**The Utopian**," a short film starring **Guillermo Diaz** ("**Half Baked**," "**Scandal**") and **Richard Riehle** ("**Office Space**," "**Glory**"), which played as a selection at the **Palm Springs International Film Festival**. While very much interested in directing, Kevin has slowly gravitated back to where it all began, and over the last several years has also been working as a cinematographer on everything from features and short films, to commercials and music videos. Most recently, he was the cinematographer on the contemporary dance film "**In Passing**" by acclaimed choreographer **Andrea Schermoly** and starring **Ashley Boudier** of the **New York City Ballet**.



NATE ADAMS, PRODUCER

Nathan Adams is a producer and post supervisor who has spent his entire life in the creative arts. As a recording engineer during the 1990's, Nathan worked with top music industry artists in some of the world's most legendary recording studios. By 2003, Nathan had transitioned almost completely from sound to picture, consulting for independent filmmakers and documentaries on production and post workflow solutions. In 2008, Nathan started his own company, **Cinematic**, generating dozens of credits for award-winning documentaries and feature films. Nathan continues to offer technical consulting and post-production services for **Cinematic**.



BRANDON ROBERTS, COMPOSER

From the dark dramatic tension of “**World War Z**,” to the pulsing orchestral action of “**The Wolverine**,” **Brandon Roberts**’ music can be found all over the film scoring world today. Surrounded by the eclectic musical scene of his hometown, Carmel, CA, Brandon developed his musical interests at a young age earning awards from **Clint Eastwood** and **The Monterey Jazz Festival**. In 1995, he began studies at the **University of Southern California** where he composed for many of the jazz ensembles. In addition, he began writing for orchestra and soon entered into the prestigious **USC Scoring for Motion Pictures & Television** graduate program where he studied with industry greats including **Elmer Bernstein**, **David Raksin** and **Christopher Young**. Upon graduating from USC, Brandon continued composing for films, television and albums in a wide range of styles. Composition projects include such large-scale feature films as “Scream 4,” “The Wolverine,” “Warm Bodies,” and “World War Z.” In addition, he has composed on several independent features including “The Woman In Black,” “Warm Bodies” and “The A-List.” Brandon’s music can be found in acclaimed television shows, as well including, “**Battlestar Galactica**,” “**Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles**,” “**V**,” and, most recently, **AMC**’s Revolutionary War spy drama, “**TURN**.” Most recently, Brandon has been regularly collaborating with **Marco Beltrami** (“The Hurt Locker,” “3:10 To Yuma”) on such projects as “The Drop” (starring **Tom Hardy**), “The Woman in Black 2: Angel of Death,” the second season of **AMC**’s “**TURN**,” “The Giver” (starring **Jeff Bridges/Meryl Streep**), and the upcoming **Fox** release, “Fantastic Four.” Brandon currently resides in Los Angeles, CA.



SEAN FERNALD, MUSIC SUPERVISOR

Sean Fernald has worked on over 100 features along with various television series, film & video game trailers, advertising spots, corporate branding campaigns and more. Sean has 10+ years of major record label experience with **MCA Records**, **Virgin Records**, **Capitol Records** and **Sony Music**, specializing in visual marketing, music video (production and promotion) and music licensing and clearance for film, television and other media. Sean is a voting member of both **N.A.R.A.S.** (National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences) and the **Guild of Music Supervisors**.



TOM HAMILTON, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Tom Hamilton is Managing Partner of **FA Life Sciences**, an early stage biotech investment company focused on bridging the gap to cure Friedreich's ataxia (FA). He is also a member of the board of the Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA), where he met Kyle Bryant, the focus of the film, "The Ataxian." Tom and Kyle went to LA in early 2014 to meet with the film's directors. It was then that Tom become Executive Producer of the film and began his relationship with "The Ataxian" team. Tom's interests are in giving leverage to any project that would help raise awareness or push towards a cure for FA. To that end, Tom is also a board member and lead investor in **Chondrial Therapeutics**. Tom is also an owner and CEO of **Conforms**, an industrial manufacturing company. Prior to Conforms, Tom was a Managing Director and Strategic Advisor to the Head of Fixed Income, Currencies and Commodities at **Barclays Capital** in New York, New York. Tom was responsible for the build out of the Global Securitized Products businesses at Barclays along with Municipal Trading and Investment Banking. Prior to Barclays, Tom worked at **Citigroup Global Markets**, and began his career at **Salomon Brothers, Inc.** in New York. Tom is married with four children and resides in Rye, New York.



SARAH DEWITT, EDITOR/ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Sarah DeWitt is a Technical Director and Editor with diverse experience in television production. She's worked on several shows including "**Dancing with the Stars**," "**Extreme Makeover: Home Edition**" and "**Big Brother**." Currently she works as a Technical Director in live sports at **TVG** and the **FOX Sports** network. Sarah first heard about "The Ataxian" through her high school friend and FA patient, Erin. Sarah contacted the filmmakers to offer any help she could and has since become an integral member of "The Ataxian" crew serving as an Editor and Associate Producer.