



Charleston's Joyce Gilliard Recognized for Career Achievement

Story by Mark Shaffer

Photos courtesy Joyce Gilliard

Even over the phone, Joyce Gilliard comes across as a force of nature. She has to be with a resume like this: 30 years as a professional hairstylist, author, activist, educator, motivational speaker, founder of the SC Hair & Makeup Network and creator of the non-profit [iSAFE! TV & FILM, LLC](#).

And somewhere in there she's managed to have a family (3 kids), work toward her doctorate in cosmetology and start another book. She's genuinely flabbergasted at being honored with the Behind the Scenes Award at this year's Beaufort International Film Festival. "I'm still trying to wrap my head around it," she says. "It's crazy."

After years of working as a Certified Cosmetologist, Gilliard broke into the business on the Charleston set of *Army Wives*. Since then her other [film and television credits](#) include *The Hunger Games*, *Paper Towns*, *Banshee*, *Goosebumps 2* and *Sleepy Hollow*.

In February of 2014 Gilliard was working on the infamous Greg Allman bio-pic, *Midnight Rider*, when a CSX freight train crashed through the set severely injuring her and several others.

Camera Assistant Sarah Jones was killed. During her long convalescence Gilliard decided something had to be done. She founded the non-profit iSAFE! TV & Film initiative. When she's not working, chances are she's traveling for iSAFE presentations. She will lead a panel discussion at BIFF on February 20

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, the fifth anniversary of the
Midnight Rider
tragedy.

I spoke to her by phone just minutes after she'd closed on a house. In Atlanta.

With an estimated \$9 billion economic impact, the Georgia film juggernaut shows no signs of slowing. And, as the old adage goes, you've got to go where the work is.

Joyce Gilliard: I still have my home in South Carolina, but I've been working here for a



year and a half and paying [crazy] rent. It just made sense. I really want to work at home. I love it and my family is there and working from a distance is hard, but we accept that this is how it will be until the [film] incentives change. But my home base is always South Carolina.

Mark Shaffer: On that note, congratulations on being honored at BIFF.

JG: Oh, gosh! I'm still in disbelief. It hasn't set in. Every time I think about it I get this anxiety because I'm like, "Me? Me?" It's such an honor to be recognized, but I never thought in a million years I'd be receiving any award for what I've done in the film business in SC.

MS: Did you always want to be in this business or did it just sort of happen?

JG: It just sort of happened. I grew up in SC and went to high school and beauty school there. My husband was military, so we moved away. But once he retired we decided to come back and make SC our home. Just before we moved back I ended up being a stylist on this reality show that kind of just *happened*. And I made some waves up north. But when we moved back I didn't really know anyone because we'd been gone so long. That's when *Army Wives* started. So, I decided to be an extra, and I changed my hair so much that they started noticing me and calling me because I could be these different people. And that's when I met the hair stylist and [eventually] the producer and that's how it started!

MS: You've done a lot of TV as well as big films like *Hunger Games* and Disney's upcoming *Jungle Cruise*.
How does the experience differ and do you have a preference?

JG: The two are totally different. With episodic TV you can work on two episodes at a time. It can be a bit draining if you have back-to-back-to-back episodes to prep for versus film – once you're finished with a scene you move on. I like TV because it's [potentially] more work with a series. With film once it's over it's over. I've been blessed to be able to work on a lot of TV.

