

## Inspiring Global Change

An Interview with Adam Umhoefer, Executive, CAA Foundation

**EDITORS' NOTE** Adam Umhoefer is an Executive at the CAA Foundation, the philanthropic arm of leading entertainment and sports agency Creative Artists Agency (CAA). Umhoefer works in the Los Angeles office and serves as a strategic advisor to actors, writers, directors, athletes, executives, and corporations on their philanthropic and pro-social initiatives. He leads the company's climate and sustainability work, providing opportunities for action and helping inspire a



Adam Umhoefer

global network of climate activists. Umhoefer has been instrumental in organizing efforts around climate storytelling, building partnerships with NRDC, the Black List, and the Redford Center for the Climate Storytelling Fellowship which supports screenwriters with grants of \$20,000 and six months of mentorship. He also helped launch Good Energy's Climate Storytelling Playbook which empowers writers by giving backstory into climate science and accountability, in depth tools for climate storytelling, and resources for artistic health and partner opportunities. Umhoefer serves on the Advisory Board of the Hollywood Climate Summit, an annual multi-day conference that creates a community space for thousands of filmmakers, executives, artists, activists, climate organizations, scientists, and other experts for interactive programming and opportunities to take action on climate. In 2023, Forbes listed Umhoefer as one of the top climate leaders changing the film and TV industry. Umhoefer began his career in nonprofit education, and later worked on President Obama's 2008 campaign. Following the 2008 election, he became a leader in the LGBTQ+ equality movement, serving as Executive Director of the American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER). Under his leadership, AFER successfully defeated Proposition 8, California's ban on marriage for gay and lesbian citizens. This historic effort paved the way for full federal marriage equality. Following several years of independent consulting for leading nonprofit organizations, Umhoefer joined CAA in 2019. He graduated from Boston College with a BA degree.

**FOUNDATION BRIEF** The CAA Foundation ([caa.com/foundation](http://caa.com/foundation)) harnesses the power and reach of the entertainment industry to create positive social change by forging strategic

partnerships, encouraging volunteerism, granting financial contributions, stimulating public awareness, and providing in-kind donations. Since launching in 1995, the CAA Foundation has become a leader in the entertainment community on education, the environment, and health and social issues. Employee involvement is at the heart of the Foundation's mission. Over the years, CAA employees have volunteered in schools, helped communities rebuild following natural disasters, served on nonprofit boards, and donated generously to service organizations around the world.

### Will you provide an overview of the CAA Foundation and how you define its mission?

Founded in 1995, the CAA Foundation is the philanthropic arm of leading entertainment and sports agency Creative Artists Agency (CAA). The Foundation continuously works to activate the power and reach of the entertainment, media, and sports industries to create systemic social change for a more equitable

and optimistic future. Our company ethos is: "If we take good care of each other, good things happen." The CAA Foundation is that in action.

### Will you discuss your role and areas of focus?

While we all wear many hats, my two primary areas of focus are leading our work on LGBTQ+ issues, along with our work on climate and sustainability. In the LGBTQ+ space, I work to ensure our colleagues and clients feel that they are employed or represented by a company that will support and celebrate them. CAA recently achieved a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index, which measures policies, procedures, and benefits affecting LGBTQ+ employees. We are also engaged deeply in climate and sustainability.

### How is CAA addressing climate concerns and sustainability?

CAA has actively worked on sustainability issues for decades, and our facilities team strives to make our operation as climate friendly as possible. Our new headquarters, currently under construction, will be among the most sustainable office buildings ever built. We



Adam Umhoefer with colleagues at CAA's Tree People event





*Adam Umboefer with colleagues planting trees at CAA's Tree People event*

also work on initiatives within Hollywood to accelerate the transition to sustainable production practices and to better represent climate in the onscreen stories we tell. We focus on supporting the many existing efforts to do this work, and bring our resources, network, and convening power to amplify their efforts.

**How is CAA helping inspire a global network of climate activists?**

CAA clients in film, TV, books, podcasts, digital media, music, and sports reach a global audience. By helping our clients channel their personal passions for our planet into action, we can inspire global change. We uplift organizations and networks doing incredible things to help save our planet. We host the Indigenous Imaginarium, an initiative to bring international Indigenous filmmakers to Hollywood, and share experiences from within their lens to re-imagine our collective climate future. CAA is also a proud sponsor of the Hollywood Climate Summit, a multi-day conference that creates a community space for thousands of cross-sector entertainment and media professionals to take action on climate.

**Will you highlight CAA's focus on building partnerships in its efforts around climate storytelling?**

We know that stories have the power to shape hearts and minds, and with respect to climate, help inspire action. We support a great number of efforts to tell more and better climate stories, forging partnerships with leading organizations who bring together creatives and climate experts. Last year, we supported Popshift: The People vs Climate Change, a convening of people from around the world whose lives have been drastically affected by climate change to meet with 50 of Hollywood's leading writers in a series of private meetings. In partnership with The Black List and The Redford Center, we

also support the NRDC Climate Screenwriting Fellowship, a program to support writers in developing compelling, constructive and inclusive climate stories.

**What was the vision for launching Good Energy's Climate Storytelling Playbook and how has this initiative progressed?**

A brilliant storyteller and strategist, Anna Jane Joyner, created and is the driving force behind the Climate Storytelling Playbook

through her organization Good Energy. The CAA Foundation believed in her vision, and partnered with Good Energy to bring our resources to help amplify the initiative. We wanted to make sure our network of creatives had access to the incredible tools and resources Anna Jane and her team were able to build.

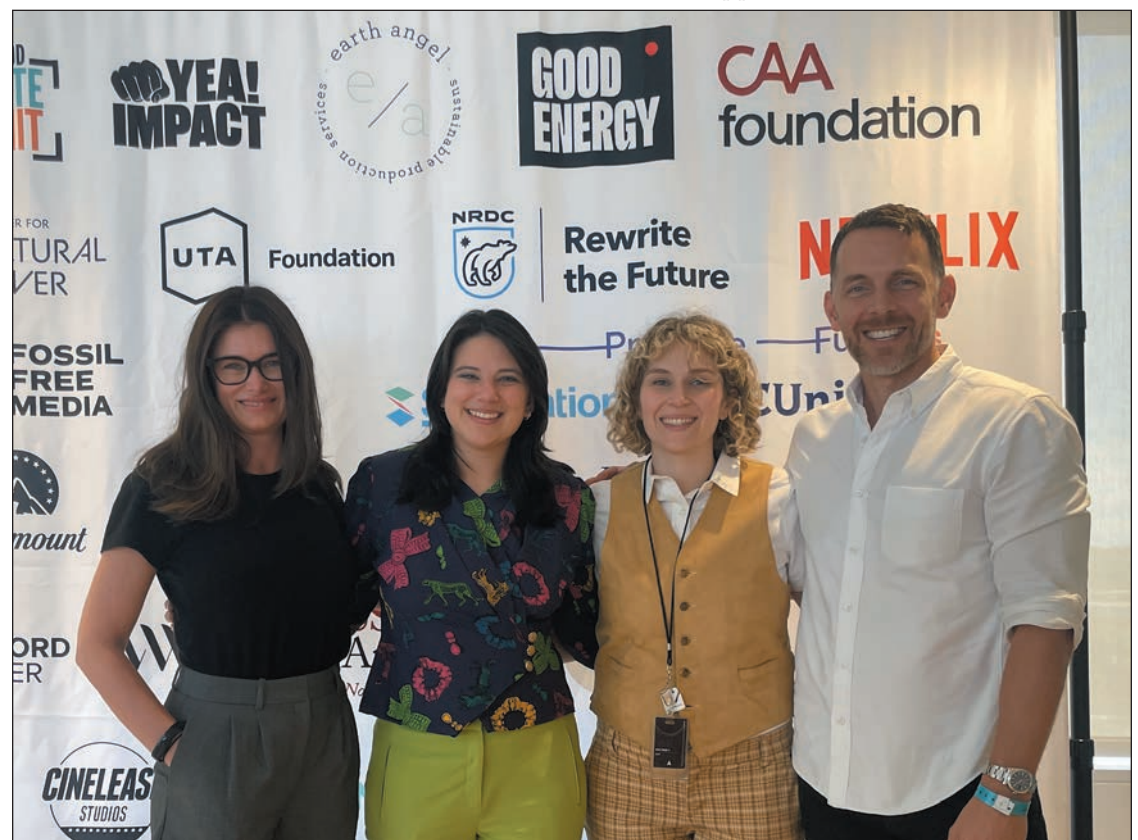
**How important are metrics to measure the impact of the CAA Foundation's work?**

We are always working to measure the impact of our work. In the climate space, we have partnerships with universities and research institutions like USC's Norman Lear Center that track and provide us with compelling data on our work. Within our walls, we closely track employee engagement and strive to achieve 100 percent participation from our colleagues in Foundation efforts.

**Will you discuss the engagement of CAA's workforce in the work of the CAA Foundation?**

Our work is not possible without the support of our colleagues. Their commitment to a more optimistic tomorrow is what drives our culture and actions. This commitment has enabled us to build out a robust employee engagement program which ranges from volunteer opportunities to Board service.

The CAA Task Force is led by our amazing assistants and staff across the globe who lead many of our community volunteer opportunities. In addition to fulfilling and impactful projects with schools and other educational settings, our Task Force has led a wide variety of environmental projects, including beach cleanups and tree planting. In April, our offices across the globe will engage in Earth Month volunteer opportunities. ●



*Adam Umboefer attends the 2023 Hollywood Climate Summit with founders Ali Weinstein (center), Allison Begalman (right), and CAA client Kat Coiro (left)*