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News

Student film highlights rights to healthy food

By Michaela Kennedy

Science students from grade six will host a premier showing of an original documentary film at the Melrose Avenue School on Saturday, June 2, at 7:30 p.m. The young filmmakers produced the film as part of an action research project called Student Provocateurs. The film focuses on a child's right to healthy food.

The film production was not just something fun to do, but had a message, according to Sydney Pazera, one of the participants. Their goal was to convey their ideas through the medium of film. The children voted on what they wanted to create, deciding to focus on a premise from the Organic Bill of Rights, that all children are entitled to safe food.

"We did endless amounts of research," classmate James Chamberlain said.

The classmates agreed that they learned a lot from the sevenmonth project. Not only did they learn about healthy food, but they also learned about group dynamics. "Other kids thought we had the easy life, but we worked really hard. We were assigned jobs, and everyone learned to work together," Molly Silvia said.

The class of 19 students formed three research groups. One group researched the connections between growth hormones injected into meat and early puberty, another explored possibilities of artificial flavors and colorings leading to attention deficit disorders, and the third studied pesticides, insecticides, and ground water contamination

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Bradford Davey of North Kingstown founded Student Provocateurs through the School of Education at Pepperdine University. The first film he produced for the project was an instructional film for middle school students on film making. Last October he approached sixth grade science teacher Deborah Barone and her class to be a part of his film project. He planned to put together a documentary with children, which showed Davey teaching children how to produce a video. "We've been filming him filming us," Barone said. The Lawn Avenue School students are the first class to participate in the Student Provocateurs program.

Barone admitted the project was more involved than either she or Davey anticipated. The students made a story board, wrote and performed skits, and did their own editing, a process that took seven months. "I didn't know how much went in to making a movie," she said. The veteran teacher revealed her excitement about the production. "I'm glad I went over the line. We all learned together," she added.

Davey, an educator and graduate student in educational technology, noted that his goal was to get students involved in the democratic process through film. He wanted to help students develop their political voice along with their technology skills. "They're building their technological literacy while getting people involved in discussions that they are interested in," he said.

Davey has introduced film projects to his own students in the last 10 years with success. "I see a certain amount of apathy. Whatever side you fall on, it's important for the kids to know there are many interesting and fun ways to tap into things," he noted.

Davey hopes the model he created will become a national model for teachers around the country and globally where they can learn from the experience of the pilot program here in Jamestown.

When asked if they would do it again, many of the young producers responded they already started new film projects on their own. Classmates Jack Tregenza and Sydney Pazera said they formed a crew to take on a film-making challenge for Heinz ketchup. Friends who were in the other sixth grade classes and not a part of the project will join the challenge, giving the young filmmakers an

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opportunity to share their newly-gained knowledge.

The middle school children showed gratitude that they were able to go beyond the borders of the classroom and experience hands-on learning. They also showed respect for the adult that made it possible for them. "Brad Davey showed us a lot of cool effects that we can edit into the film," Amina Brown said.

Davey admitted the program could not have worked without teacher support. He was surprised and pleased at the teacher's level of participation. "She was able to change her curriculum for the year to accommodate the program," he said about Barone.

Davey, Barone and the students extend thanks to Casey Farms, the Organic Center and Jamestown School Principal Kathleen Almanzor for support of the project.

All are invited to the premier event on Saturday. Dewey will also interview the public about the film to gain feedback for the project.

After the premier, the finished video will be available for viewing online at www.studentprovocateurs.com. For more information about the film program for educators, contact Bradford Davey at 465-9323.

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