

feature

Hot Spot: Community Engagement

Community Experts Mentor Teens and New Adults

By Laurie Bartz

Teens at Hedberg Public Library in Janesville, Wisconsin, are learning new media and technology skills with the help of community experts. Connecting with partners and engaging teens with interest-driven programs is creating opportunities for leadership roles and internships for teens and new adults.

Teens recently participated in a four-part Basics of Filmmaking workshop through a community partnership with local videographers Stephen and Cameron Pickering from Drywater Productions. The workshop was recommended by Teen Advisory Board (TAB) member and film, 3D animation, and graphic design enthusiast Jacob Cullum. He and other TAB members participated in a similar workshop series for youth at the Beloit International Film Festival.

Stephen began making movies as a teen growing up in Janesville, and he and Cameron were excited for the opportunity

to share their skills with area youth. They are the recipients of several awards, including two Telly Awards, a BIFFY Award for a documentary for the Beloit International Film Festival, and a pre-game Super Bowl airing of a commercial they produced.

Establishing a partnership with Drywater based on the interests of youth demonstrates that the library and community value youth.

The Role of the Public Library in Teen Development

The public library is a vital resource that is often one of the few locations in a community that welcomes teens and provides important resources. When libraries are places that provide access to, and participation with, media in both formal and informal settings, they go beyond being safe places in which

teens can simply hang out. In this case, our partnership enabled teens to have access to expert knowledge and film equipment. According to YALSA's "The Future of Library Services for and with Teens: A Call to Action: "Working with other community members can expand what a library can provide for teens and create with teens when it comes to media literacy education, and this will give teens the chance to connect to others who can play a valuable educational, informational, and personal role in their lives, especially in relation to workforce preparedness." An effective public library can also serve as a protective layer that helps teens avoid risks, focus on individual assets, and increase competence.

Learning to Make Films

During the first session, teens learned the importance of developing the story structure. They assembled a familiar story into the correct sequence and then identified the important elements in several short films. Next students were shown the basic rules of filmmaking. They learned that a film can look good by using correct composition even when filming is done with an iPhone. Then groups worked on setting the camera following the 180 degree rule and the rule of 3rds, and utilized proper camera angles and placement of the subject in the frame.

During the lighting and sound session, teens discovered that equipment and lights found around the home or garage can be used to make a film look professional. Avoiding or eliminating audio interference or extraneous sounds like refrigerators, heating or cooling systems, and passing cars was considered. A simple three-point lighting system with utility lights and household lamps and some of Drywater's lighting equipment was used during shooting

Trained as a teacher/librarian, LAURIE BARTZ is currently Young Adult Librarian at Hedberg Public Library in Janesville, Wisconsin, where she oversees the library's teen program and facilitates the Teen Advisory Board and teen volunteer program. Bartz enjoys partnering with other youth-serving organizations to provide programs and outreach in the community and is a member of YALSA's 2016 Best Fiction for Young Adults committee.

and directing of a short piece, called “The Interrogation,” made during the workshop.

Editing techniques were demonstrated during the final session. Stephen and Cameron stressed the importance of “worrying the edit” or watching a scene numerous times and sometimes moving a shot a mere fraction of a second to ensure a quality final product. The introduction and transition to new scenes was facilitated through use of storyboards. Stephen returned for a separate session to teach students hands-on film editing techniques in the library’s computer lab.

Teens Using Their Newly Developed Skills

Following the Filmmaking Workshop, students were eager to use the knowledge they gained and decided to enter the 2014 Teen Video Challenge contest sponsored by the Cooperative Summer Library Program. The teens divided into groups for this project. One group of students met to write the script and focus on promoting libraries and reading. Another group proposed character choices. It was quickly determined that the video would include a mad scientist and her cat in an abandoned library. The props team located a lab coat, goggles, glass beakers, wiring diagrams, and electrical components from the local hardware store.

The film was directed by TAB member Jacob Cullum, and the entire group of eight teens collaborated by using the free screenwriting tool Celtx. Jacob shot scenes, while others set up lights and placed props around the library. Jacob also edited and added special effects to the film titled “Dire Straights.” It was entered in the 2014 Teen Video Challenge and won first place in

Wisconsin. According to the judges, the entry scored high marks for its creativity, message clarity, inspirational qualities, and overall impact.

The film was featured on the Teen Central at Hedberg Public Library Facebook page and was shown during a celebratory screening for teens and their friends and families. Participants received certificates, and a cash prize was divided and distributed among all members. There is continued interest in filmmaking among teens, and this year JATV Media Services, an award-winning local public access studio, joined Drywater Productions to help guide students with their film projects.

What Came Next

The next step for Hedberg Public Library involved empowering youth as leaders and guides. While in TAB, Jacob created a rendered image of a 3D model of the Mechanical Hound in Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* using Blender, a free 3D creation software suite. Jacob’s entry was selected as a finalist and Editor’s Choice in the 2013 “It Came From a Book” Teen Art Contest sponsored by The Library as Incubator Project. Outside the library, Jacob won Best Film in the Beloit International Film Festival Student Showcase in 2014 and recently released a demo reel on his website showcasing his 3D work. His skills also enabled him to work as an assistant for Drywater Productions. Jacob graduated from high school and taught a 3D design class for teens at the library this summer using Blender. Students created projects and requested that Blender be added to library computers in the teen area. In addition, a teen internship has been created by JATV Media Services.

More Teen Leadership Opportunities

Teens helped staff design Minecraft games used at programs and assisted patrons of all ages at stations at a Teen Tech Week Showcase event at the library, several joined a Tech Team to help the library plan for use of its new 3D printer. Our 2014 TAB president suggested partnering with a local music store and its Band Camp for our Youth Battle of the Bands. The Battle is a successful collaboration with the City of Janesville Recreation Division, JATV Media Services, Knapton Music Knotes, and JM4C, a local youth coalition. The TAB president, a recent graduate of our teen program, will join the Battle of the Bands planning team. Another graduate recently taught a class for teens on advanced paracord survival bracelet techniques.

The YALSA Call to Action reminds us that “The library is no longer simply a quiet place to connect to physical content. It is instead a place, physical and virtual, to learn how to connect and use resources of all types from physical books to apps to experts in a local, regional, or national community.” Media exists alongside print in various platforms, and teens must become proficient with a variety of technological tools and demonstrate innovative skills in order to succeed. Library programs that incorporate media and technology provide opportunities for libraries to connect students with high-interest learning, content creation and sharing. Through the dedication of community members like Stephen and Cameron Pickering and JATV Media Services, teens and recent graduates are learning skills and taking leadership roles, internships, and jobs in the library and community. YALSA