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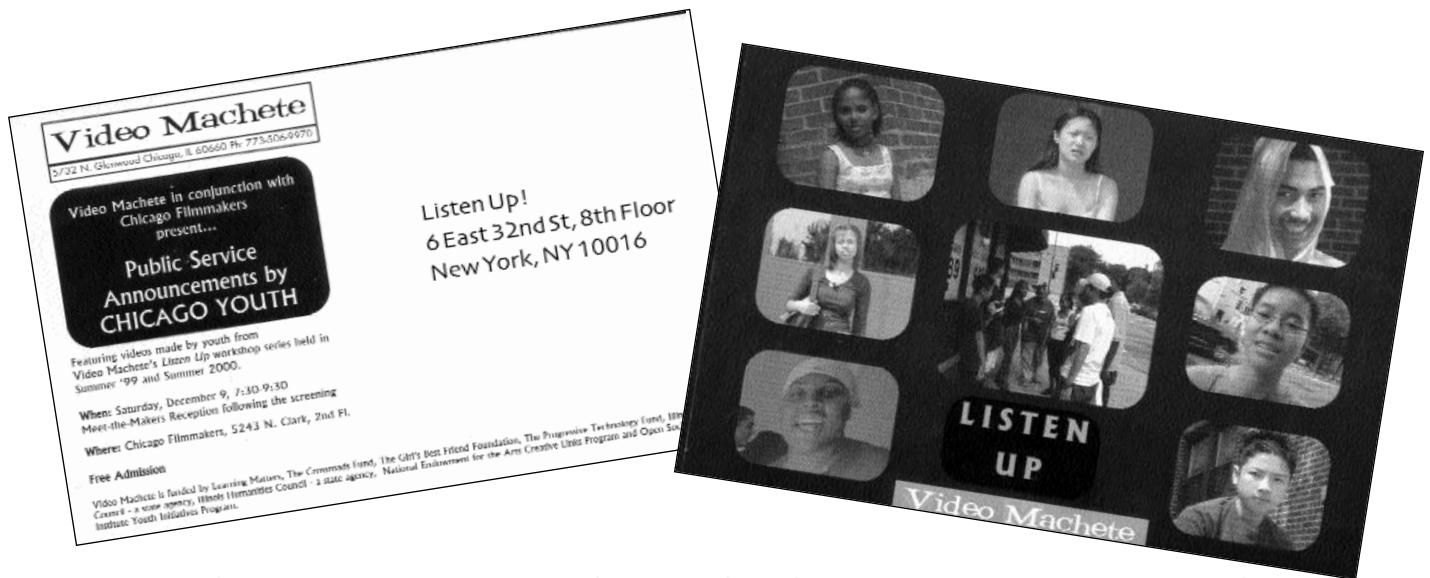
## HOLDING COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

Community presentations are an excellent way to demonstrate the outcomes of your youth media program. They can take a variety of forms and can be held in a wide range of venues. Whatever their format, community presentations allow producers and audiences to interact about the topics, issues and creative self-expression conveyed in the productions. Whether aired on radio or TV, posted on the Web or projected on a screen, these presentations can be an effective means of bringing youth views, hopes and concerns to the forefront of public thought and discussion.

For program participants, presenting and discussing their work and witnessing its impact at community screenings can have many positive outcomes. The experience can validate their ideas as well as build public speaking skills, increase self-confidence and motivate them to be involved in community life. Community presentations offer audiences greater understanding and appreciation of diverse perspectives, opinions and talent. As a result, these kinds of events present a major opportunity for youth media programs to attract organizations for future collaborations, to demonstrate the value of their programs to funders, and generate interest among community leaders and potential participants.

*“Young people want their work out there. Distribution is an important part of the process that shouldn’t be ignored. We often approach youth media projects as media campaigns that seek to make some kind of change in the community. Local TV and radio stations on or around Indian reservations (where we do our work) have been very willing to air youth pieces as part of a campaign. Seeing work on TV and hearing it on the radio certainly gives the youth producers a sense of accomplishment and legitimacy while also enhancing the general reputation of the youth population in their community.”*

PAUL SANTOMENNA, NATIVE VISION



**Postcard blitz! Postcards are an excellent way to inform potential audience members of your event. Courtesy of Video Machete (Chicago, IL).**

Listen Up! member organizations say they have found community presentations are vital to youth media programs because they can:

- ▶ allow young people to share their knowledge and experiences, reinforcing their own learning, pride, and self-esteem.
- ▶ create a forum for youth to receive public recognition and celebration of their efforts.
- ▶ generate a wider audience for youth media.
- ▶ encourage youth to produce high quality work.
- ▶ serve as an organizing tool around local issues by engaging community members in discussions of the topics and ideas in the media productions.
- ▶ increase the visibility of youth media projects and, consequently, generate public and financial support for programs.
- ▶ function as a recruiting tool to bring more participants into media programs.
- ▶ motivate parents and community members to get involved in youth media projects.
- ▶ provide a venue to recognize and thank local sponsors and supporters.

*“We make a point of distributing the youth media work to any community-based group or social service agency who would have an interest in viewing and/or using these videos. These CBOs and agencies can screen the work for staff, constituents, members, Board of Directors, interested community members and elected officials. They can also use it during their orientations, information sessions, fundraisers or regular meetings.”*

MAUREEN MULLINAX, APPALACHIAN MEDIA INSTITUTE

**SPOTLIGHT****Generating an Audience for Exposure and Outreach**

LATITIA MCCREE, PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION

Each year we have hosted a “Media’s Impact on Life” writing contest. We secure sponsors to give prizes to award three or four top winners and 100 honorable mentions. Prizes have included a year-long movie pass to the Star Theatre, a Sony play station, a Sony camcorder, a Circuit City gift certificate and more. Contestants are asked to describe in 250 words or less how they believe media affects our lives. All participants are invited to the SCOOP premiere which is a showcase of student produced media work. This builds an audience of 300-500 students, parents and educators to view youth work and to publicly honor and celebrate both SCOOP producers and their peers for exploring media through poetry, essay and rap. The contest generates a big audience in a way that exposes more youth, parents and educators to the SCOOP program.

*“Try to get a truly local venue to participate (it might be your local bookstore, beer pub or theater). In my experience, they are very receptive to the idea. Of course it’s essential that you have portable projection equipment. The idea is to place the screening within the community in which the work was produced, reducing the travel and accessibility barriers.”*

KRISTIN KONSTERLIE, NORTHWEST FILM CENTER

**Places to Hold Community Presentations**

Community presentations can be held in any number of places. Get creative and fun when thinking about the best venue for your event. You might try:

- ▶ Public Access, PBS and NPR television and radio channels
- ▶ Local schools (from elementary to community colleges; in classes, after school, in home rooms, or over closed circuit TV systems)
- ▶ Faith-based organizations (synagogues, churches, mosques)
- ▶ Community service group meetings (e.g., Moose Lodge, Kiwanis Club, etc.)
- ▶ Social service agencies and social action organizations
- ▶ Cultural and community centers
- ▶ Housing projects and homeless centers
- ▶ After school youth centers or teen programs
- ▶ Outdoor park or public commons

- ▶ Community or local government meetings
- ▶ Film and video festivals
- ▶ Curated local or national screening programs (e.g., Access Orbit)
- ▶ World wide web
- ▶ Museums, art galleries and media arts centers
- ▶ Cafés or other local businesses
- ▶ City Hall or other public facilities
- ▶ Recruitment fairs for community based organizations (e.g., 4-H)
- ▶ Workshops and conferences on youth development, youth media, community education and community organizing



**Christen Marquez (right) and Miyo Tubridy (center) of the 911 Media Arts Center and independent producer Emily Green (left) present their videos at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival's Gen-Y Studio.**

*“We often create workshops that are focused on a particular theme, social issue or community. The media produced in these workshops is then screened to the community(ies) and constituency(ies) that are immediately involved or impacted. For example, one of our off-site Global Youth Program workshops focused on Korean-American youth participants and themes. The completed videotape was screened at the Korean-American Community Services Center.”*

DALIDA MARIA BENFIELD, VIDEO MACHETE

## TOOLBOX

### The Video Afterlife

BY JESIKAH MARIA ROSS & TODD SAMUSSON

Often youth media projects culminate in short video pieces that are presented only once. They deserve much more use! Consider using these videos to encourage community dialogue and action. Here are just a few suggestions:

- ▶ Place a copy of the video in city and school libraries or video rental stores.
- ▶ Organize a panel of community members and producers to discuss the content of the video after a local screening, a community meeting or a city event.
- ▶ Coordinate your efforts with local agencies promoting the same message. Donate a copy of the video to these agencies to use in educational activities.

See the **SAMPLES** sections for a selection of posters and press releases that promote screenings.

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**SPOTLIGHT****No TV station? No problem.**

BY PAUL SANTOMENNA, NATIVE VISION

In the mid 1990s, I worked on the Fort Apache Indian reservation with adolescent members of the White Mountain Apache Tribe to produce radio and television PSAs in support of the Tribe's substance abuse prevention initiative. The young people and I set up a video editing suite and radio production room in one of the tribal buildings and started producing PSAs for the community radio station and the soon-to-be-built community television station. After some initial video production training, we got word that the funding for the TV station had fallen through. There was no distribution outlet for the PSAs we were about to produce. So, we looked for alternative ways to get the work out to our target audience of Apache parents.

We knew that much of the small Apache population (12,500) eventually made its way to the handful of businesses and services that were available in White River, the one major reservation town. If we could just get TV/VCR combo units in the supermarket, bank, post office, hospital waiting rooms and a few other popular places, we could run a constant loop of the spots and reach our audience. We bought the TV/VCRs and since we were backed by the Tribe, it was quite easy to get permission to put units in the places we wanted to. It was a little harder to keep the looped tapes rolling, however. Youth workers made regular rounds to our impromptu video outlets, turning on TVs, replacing worn out tapes and placating employees who were being driven somewhat insane by hearing the same PSAs over and over all day long. To compromise, we'd mute the sets in some places and just count on the visual impact of the spots. A victim of its own success, our TV was evicted from the post office because the video spots were causing people to loiter excessively in the lobby, against government regulations.

Despite the labor-intensive and unorthodox nature of this kind of distribution, it does hold two specific advantages. First, material does not have to conform to standard broadcast specifications or lengths. Second, it reaches the target audience remarkably well. According to a campaign evaluation conducted by the University of New Mexico, 64% of Apache parents saw at least one of the video spots. Although our approach might not work well with a more geographically or culturally diverse audience, I would urge youth producers to consider this distribution model for more rural and isolated areas like ethnic enclaves, small towns, army bases and the like.

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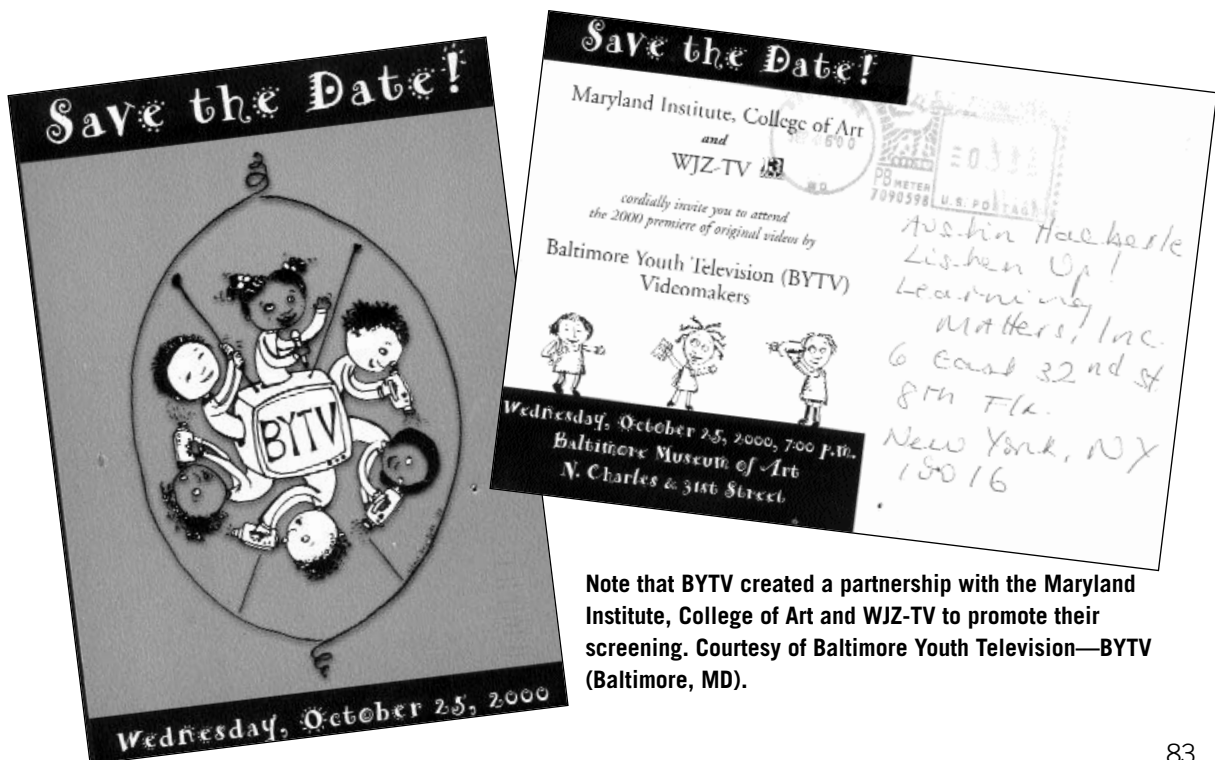
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## STRATEGIES FOR ORCHESTRATING COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

Organizing community presentations can add a valuable dimension to your youth media program. It is a fantastic opportunity to teach participants the art of bringing people together to share ideas and issues of mutual interest and concern. Doing community research, tapping into community assets, developing and implementing outreach plans, and in the process speaking to diverse community members helps youth connect to the physical, cultural and socio-economic contexts surrounding their efforts. This helps them learn about themselves and their communities as well as gain greater self-esteem and networking skills for effective community organizing.

*“Developing partnerships with other youth groups and community organizations, while having the youth producers involved in the preparation and outreach of the event, helps build new audiences and provides a forum for students to actively discuss their work.”*

TATIANA LOUREIRO, DCTV



Note that BYTV created a partnership with the Maryland Institute, College of Art and WJZ-TV to promote their screening. Courtesy of Baltimore Youth Television—BYTV (Baltimore, MD).

## Tips for Organizing Community Presentations

When organizing and planning community presentations, there are many things your youth group might think about. For example:

- ▶ What do we want to accomplish by presenting our work to the community? What impact or outcome would we like to have?
- ▶ Who do we want to see/hear this production? Who is our target audience?
- ▶ Where could we hold a presentation to reach these audiences (e.g., community spaces, radio channels, Web pages)?
- ▶ What are the advantages or limitations to these sites? Which sites are the best match for our vision of what we want to accomplish through our presentation?
- ▶ Who do we know that can help us secure our desired community presentation site?
- ▶ Who do we need to speak to about arranging a presentation at our desired location?
- ▶ How do we approach the people we must speak with about arranging our presentation? What do we say and how do we represent our project?
- ▶ Will we need additional funding to hold community presentations? If so, how can we go about getting sponsors? Who would we approach to sponsor our event? What would we say to them?
- ▶ What resources (equipment, chairs, snacks) are available or needed for the presentation?
- ▶ What are some next steps in securing sites, funding, sponsors or resources?
- ▶ Who in the group will be responsible for taking on which tasks?
- ▶ What is a good timeline for each step? When should each task be done?

See the **SAMPLES** section for documents to help you organize your community screenings and events.

*“Engage participants and their immediate communities in organizing the screening. Create a screening committee that involves participants, parents and others. Find out what times and locations are most appropriate. Develop a publicity campaign with them. Plan the “script” of the screening together.”*

DALIDA MARIA BENFIELD, VIDEO MACHETE

Have those participants involved in publicizing a community presentation come up with “talking points”—ways to communicate their project goals and intentions to an audience. The process of determining how they will discuss and promote their community presentations invests young people with a sense of ownership and authority over the event. It also gives them a way to talk about their upcoming presentations in a consistent and coherent way.

*“The “Do It Your Damn Self!! National Youth Video and Film Festival” was created in 1996 by youth in our Teen Media Program who felt strongly that youth produced videos do not have sufficient outlets to be viewed and appreciated by a wider audience. Since then, the festival has occurred each year and has become an integral part of our Teen Media Program, with members working year after year helping it grow and improve. While providing a framework for our own year-round curriculum, the festival offers youth, both locally and nationally, an opportunity to speak about issues in their own lives through the video medium. The specific goals of the festival include: helping youth appreciate and assume responsibility of managing and presenting a national festival of their peers’ work; fostering local and national relationships among teen video producers and youth media programs; and generating a substantial audience of youth and adults who can appreciate the efforts and perspectives of youth-produced video and film.”*

JOE DOUILLETTE, TEEN MEDIA PROGRAM, COMMUNITY ART CENTER, INC.



Courtesy of the Cambridge Community Art Center's Teen Media Program and the Do It Your Damn Self!! National Youth Video and Film Festival (Cambridge, MA).

## Ideas to Spice Up the Event

To create an event that people will really remember, you may want to try:

- ▶ inviting a wide range of community members. Differences can generate important dialogue, networking and alliance building.
- ▶ providing food. Snacks and/or beverages set a “homey” atmosphere.
- ▶ playing music. Music gives an ambiance, style, or feel to the event.
- ▶ handing out program notes. Program notes lend a professional look and feel to the presentation, give audience members an idea of what to expect, and provide friends and family with a memento to take home.
- ▶ conducting a raffle. Raffles generate enthusiasm, raise funds, and involve local businesses in your community presentation.

See the **SAMPLES** section for BYTV’s fall screening program notes.

## Tips in Facilitating Community Presentations

In order to create an engaging and meaningful public event, it's worth spending some time helping your participants prepare for presenting their work. As a group, you might try the following:

- ▶ discuss what would make the presentation effective and what the group would need to learn how to do or practice to create an effective presentation.
- ▶ do some role playing to build skills in facilitating group discussion, handling controversial comments and speaking in front of groups.
- ▶ create a format for introducing the presentation, a series of questions to stimulate a community conversation, and protocols for how to answer questions for audience members.

*“Engage audiences in substantial, youth-led discussions about the work. Use the opportunity of the screening for cross-generational, cross-cultural dialogue, and to develop youth as public speakers who can facilitate transformational conversation.”*

DALIDA MARIA BENFIELD, VIDEO MACHETE

*“Many of the youth-produced videos have strong social messages. One of them is about teen date rape. Knowing that showing this piece might generate some serious discussion, we are working with a local health agency to either train us or attend the screening to field some of the questions.”*

JOE DOUILLETTE, TEEN MEDIA PROGRAM, COMMUNITY ART CENTER, INC.

## Post Production Debriefing

After your fabulous media event, in the midst of all the exhilaration, don't forget to spend some time debriefing. It can be an extremely valuable learning moment if, soon after the presentation, those involved can share what they felt was successful or effective and what they would do differently next time. This constructive feedback often boosts confidence and generates new knowledge for the future. If there is another community presentation planned, create a list of things the group can agree to do differently at the next presentation.

**In order to promote youth-produced public service messages and help educate audiences during screenings, the producers at the Community Art Center's Teen Media Program (Cambridge, MA) create these program notes for each PSA.**

