

Students sharpen focus on filmmaking

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Chris Rufo, left, and Keith Ochwat are documentary filmmakers who work with high school students through their Documentary Foundation.

Chris Rufo and Keith Ochwat took 50 local students from 16 high schools and turned them loose with cameras.

Rufo and Ochwat are young local filmmakers who've already had success in the documentary field and decided to share some of what they know with the next generation.

Through their Documentary Foundation, they ran an eight-week course for the students and had them make documentaries on topics of their own choosing – Oak Park, life as a gay teen, teen pregnancy, tattooing and more.

Ochwat said the public will be able to view the resulting 12 films – each under five minutes – on Tuesday at the Documentary Foundation's Web site, www.documentaryfoundation.org. Students, their friends and families will have a private screening Sunday at the Benvenuti Performing Arts Center at Natomas Charter School in Sacramento.

We talked to two of the high school filmmakers, Ruby Santos and Oliver Boido. Santos, a junior at Christian Brothers High School, worked with students from McClatchy and New Technology high schools on a film about Oak Park and its community center.

Boido, a student at Natomas Charter School, worked with two home-schooled students and a Davis High student on a documentary on the new county animal shelter.

What do you like about doing documentaries?

Santos: You can just tap into your creativity. It can be interesting; it can be sad; it can be controversial. It can be anything you want it to be.

Boido: I'm really into filmmaking. That's what I want to do careerwise, if possible.

What was the process like?

Santos: It was difficult and frustrating at times and other times it was rewarding. Sometimes the camera didn't work. The rewarding side was seeing a program (the Oak Park Community Center) that worked.

Boido: (Our documentary) is about the county pound. We pretty much just followed the story of a dog named Cleopatra. The first day we were there we chose six dogs to follow. Two days later five of the six dogs had been put down. We're thinking of later going in to do a half-hour-long documentary.

How did you get to interview Mayor Kevin Johnson for the film?

Santos: My mother knows him, so I contacted his adviser Joaquin McPeck, and we set up an interview day. He grew up in Oak Park and we asked him about his experiences and his view of Oak Park; his dreams for Oak Park and what it has been and the history.

What was the most surprising or difficult thing about making the documentary?

Santos: Mostly the behind the scenes. It was just getting everything prepared. It was just all the planning. Maybe I underestimated it.

Boido: Probably timing, getting everyone together to film at the same time, and coordinating that with when the pound was open and people we wanted to interview were available. The other hard part was going through and realizing how many of these animals were put down. I think everyone wished they could come home with a couple of animals.

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