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:: Local Students Spend Election Day at the 'Ballotbox'



*Students from the Academy for Careers in Television & Film interview a voter on Election Day.
Photo courtesy of ACTvF.*

December 3, 2008 - This year's presidential election engaged a younger generation of voters and inspired a particular group of local students from the Academy for Careers in Television & Film (ACTvF) who were given cameras to document democracy in action on Election Day.

ACTvF, a Queens-based high school that connects students to employment opportunities in television and film production, saw this historic day as an opportunity to get their students involved in a project they named "Project Ballotbox". The process was designed to "shed some light on the democratic process in its finest incarnation: the neighborhood voting place," said Alan Metzger, Director of the Production Unit at ACTvF.

Beginning at 5 am on Tuesday, November 4, 36 students from ACTvF gathered at a local Queens polling place (PS234 in Astoria) and spent the whole day documenting what unfolded.

ACTvF received permission from the Board of Elections to shoot everything they witnessed, with the exception of voters in the voting booths. Students conducted 130 interviews of poll managers, poll workers, and voters, resulting in over 15 hours of material.

"It was our first experience in the real world with our equipment. Being with people made us work harder and better," said Max Mejia, a freshman ACTvF student.

"It was so much more than I expected. Hands-on training is awesome!" exclaimed freshman ACTvF student Frisly Soberanis.

"First semester freshman year at ACTvF has students learning shooting principles employing basic video and sound gear," explained Metzger. "These crews have, in the short time we've been open, developed facility and poise that far exceeded what we

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anticipated. With the historic '08 election on the horizon, we felt it possible to have our school create a project that would combine authentic participation with a unique learning experience, hence 'Project Ballotbox'."

The idea behind ACTvF was born three years ago, when members of the New York Production Alliance (NYPA), an industry advocacy organization, approached New Visions for Public Schools with an idea for a high school in Queens that would connect students to career opportunities in the film industry. Located in Long Island City, ACTvF is unique in providing students with a range of job opportunities, including many "below-the-line" positions neglected by the majority of other high school programs.

The membership of NYPA, the school's main partner, represents a cross section of the industry and includes the owners of New York's major studios, top producers and directors, unions, and scores of other industry businesses and organizations. Through this partnership, students benefit from unparalleled opportunities to work with industry professionals and gain the necessary experience to support their career and academic aspirations.

Individuals and organizations interested in supporting ACTvF, serving as industry advisors to curriculum development teams, working with students on projects, or hosting class trips or interns can visit www.actvf.org or contact Alan Metzger at (718) 472-0536.

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