

FREE SPIRIT MEDIA

newsletter • spring 2006

YOUTH PRODUCED TELEVISION FOR CHICAGO AND BEYOND

HoopsHIGH Takes On the United Center

Down in overtime, it was clear that the Bulls were going to lose to the Sacramento Kings. While other fans streamed out early, the three HoopsHIGH announcers were relishing the last few moments of their magical day at the United Center.

"We were on the scoreboard FIVE times!" Kemarius Lee said with the same enthusiasm he has on air.

"Take a picture of just me!" said Antwone Smith, as he and fellow announcers, Kemarius and Jacolby Fisher, posed with the basketball court far below them.

Earlier in the afternoon, the HoopsHIGH sport broadcasting crew covered a North Lawndale College Prep game on the Bulls' home court. HoopsHIGH co-director Rafie Fields also gave them a behind-the-scenes tour of the United Center Scoreboard Operations, where he works camera and replay on a freelance basis.

"All day I felt on top of the world," Twon said later.

"To sit down and announce on the professional floor—it was like I was already there, like my dream had already come true."

Members of the HoopsHIGH at NLCP Sports Broadcasting Club joined the After School Matters advanced crew to shoot the Phoenix's victory against rival, John Hope. (Please See **United Center** on page 3)



Left to Right: Kemarius Lee, Antwone Smith, and Jacolby Fisher soak in every bit of their United Center experience.

Free Spirit Media Hits the Big Screen

Free Spirit Media students enjoyed Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by going out to the movies—their own movies. FSM hosted about 200 students, parents, and community members at ICE Theaters at Homan & Roosevelt for a showcase on the big screen.

"It was amazing....Instead of seeing other people's work, I got to see MY work on the big screen," said Darrell Lewis, a North Lawndale College Prep senior. "It was a dream come true."

The quality of the work, which came from FSM's NLCP classes, Umoja partnership, and HoopsHIGH program, impressed Alisa Starks, who owns ICE Theaters with her husband Donzell.

"I think the work is important, truly valuable," she said. "It gives the kids an opportunity to get exposed to different career opportunities and use their creativity."

Youth media organizations throughout Chicago share this important job with Free Spirit Media.

While the MLK Day showcase featured only FSM's work, FSM hosted another showcase a month earlier to celebrate the youth media movement.

This showcase, at Malcolm X College, included submissions from Girls Get Digital, Street-Level Youth



Inset: Duane Davis, Chair of the MXC Communication and Fine Arts Department, with star FSM student director Nick Crawford.

Media and Urban Chi Filmmakers. The goal of the event was to bring the organizations together as partners and share youth voices from across Chicago.

A standing-room-only crowd of about 350 filled the theater and voted for their favorite pieces.

Mike-Mike Christmas Surprise, a comedy about Mama kissing Santa Clause, was most popular by both votes and laughs.

"It made me feel good," Nick Crawford, an NLCP sophomore and *Mike-Mike's* author, director, and

Santa, said of the audience's reaction. "It made me feel like all the work I did on the piece was actually worth it because they enjoyed the piece."

Two more audience favorites were *Change*, the FSM & Umoja Community Builders' documentary, and *The Effects of a Fatherless Life*, a documentary of four students' stories of growing up without a father.

**You are invited to the next
Free Spirit Media
Youth Media Showcase
Wednesday, May 17, 2006 at 3:30 p.m.
ICE Theaters, corner of Homan & Roosevelt**

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Twon and Colby

Antwone Smith and Jacolby Fisher (Twon and Colby) studied the program notes and articles about North Lawndale College Prep's road to the State Tournament. They discussed their notes from pre-game interviews with two of Chicago's top Prep Sports writers, the Tribune's Bob Sakamoto and the Sun Times' Steve Tucker. It was a big game, but the two announcers were not nervous.

"Before a game, I'm just ready," Colby said. "I'm relaxed."

"It's all about basketball," Twon said. "Nobody can touch me with any other issues. For those couple of hours, I can talk about something I love."

Their preparation and confidence was evident as they captured NLCP's Super-Sectional win with energy and insight. The senior announcers have enhanced the HoopsHIGH shows by pushing professionalism as much as fun.

Already a fan of the show, Colby joined HoopsHIGH as a sophomore.

"I wanted to be the Big Wal," he said, referring to the quick-witted announcer from 2001-2003 who gave HoopsHIGH a reputation with his "yo mama" jokes.

The older announcers liked to ridicule new apprentices. Colby, however, had a sense of humor, stuck with it, and surpassed his role models by the end of the year.

Like his predecessors, he is talented at goofing around both on and off camera, but he also regards HoopsHIGH as training for a future as an ESPN sports analyst. His drive and work ethic helped him become the lead play-by-play announcer in just one season.

When HoopsHIGH had an opening in the middle of Colby's junior year, he recommended Twon. Colby

thought his Westinghouse classmate had potential as an announcer, even though the HoopsHIGH team was looking for a video engineer.

"I was trying to find myself," Twon said. "I didn't know what I wanted to do. I thought it was the perfect time to try something new."

With Colby's encouragement, Twon picked up the microphone and immediately contributed his basketball knowledge to the broadcast.

"I pretty much discovered him," boasted Colby.

When Twon realized the audience appreciated his style and analysis, he began dreaming of becoming an NBA analyst.

With lofty goals, the two work hard to improve. They watch professional broadcasts, incorporate pre-game research into their broadcasts, and do well in school.

"English became my favorite subject due to the fact that I want to become an announcer," Twon said.

English class allows him to increase his vocabulary and develop his speaking abilities. If he does not go into broadcasting, he might want to teach English.

English is also Colby's favorite subject because he likes writing. He wants to be a journalist if not a TV sports analyst.

Next year Twon and Colby will continue to pursue their dreams at college: Twon at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana and Colby at either Northwestern University, Columbia College or Illinois State University.

"My friends would describe me as focused," Twon said. "They respect me because I want to do something...and they want to see how far I will go."



Twon (left) and Colby (right) announce on the United Center floor for the NLCP vs. John Hope game.

FEEDBACK

At the end of each semester, we ask our Video Production students to evaluate our class. Here are some responses:

"When students are active in making their own media, they show the world what's going on from their perspective. Students allow the viewers to see what the TV stations do not show. This class allows students to understand that we have a voice. It shows you how to take matters in your own hands to make a change or to inform."

-Brittany Spralls



"The best part is watching myself on the television...I just like being in the spotlight. I like to be the star."

-Demetrius Brewer

"I think that the very best part of this class is being able to take our thoughts and ideas and turn them into very powerful films that influence and encourage others. Also, although you have to put in a lot of work, it's kind of fun."

-Antoinette Davis

"I've learned that when I sit down and concentrate on things, I'm able to produce great work."

-Aiesha Jones

"I would not change anything, but make the class longer."

-Nick Frills

United Center

HoopsHIGH's NLCP crew recorded every Phoenix game, home or away, with a one-camera, two-announcer setup. The United Center game allowed them to see and experience a full broadcast setup.

"It was cool. I was on the floor. I was important," said Leland Lenon, an NLCP senior who shot the "hero" camera, getting close-ups of playmakers during the game. Leland was also impressed with the professional broadcasters' equipment he saw at the United Center.

Through a tour of Scoreboard Operations, Rafie showed the crew the professional extension of their skills. The scoreboard uses a similar but more elaborate setup than HoopsHIGH's, with the director choosing what the fan sees on the scoreboard's Jumbotron from seven camera angles, two replay machines and two graphic machines.

"It was like the big time," HoopsHIGH director Ashley Frazier said. "I was in awe."

Ashley admitted to being intimidated by the wall of monitors used by the scoreboard's director. She chooses which shot the HoopsHIGH viewer at home will see from four camera angles and one replay.

Ashley also walked away from the tour with more respect for Rafie.

"I know I end up having a headache after a game, but him, I don't know how he does it," she said.

That night, Rafie worked the hero camera during the game. Whenever the scoreboard wanted shots of fans, Rafie found the HoopsHIGH crew and NLCP staff and students. The announcers especially delighted in being on the scoreboard, even dancing for the camera.

After practicing their sports broadcasting skills and seeing their potential in the professional arena, the crew celebrated with dinner at Wishbone restaurant.



Rafie Fields explains the directors' job at the United Center Scoreboard Operations.

Behind the Camera: A Student's Perspective

Vernita Brown, a senior at North Lawndale College Prep, wrote her personal statement for college on what she learned through taking the FSM at NLCP "Designing Documentary" class last year. Here are her inspiring words:

According to a study by Northeastern University in 2002, a quarter of African American men ages 20 to 64 were not employed at any point during the year. The year-round joblessness rate for black men was twice as high as that of white and Hispanic males. These statistics help explain why so many African American men turn to the streets to sell drugs. From the outside, all people see is a waste of time: men showing no effort to improve their lives, men who have let their ancestors down by not getting the education or the employment that our predecessors have worked so hard to achieve for us.

It fell upon five high school teens to figure out why these men sell drugs instead of going to school and getting a job. For my "Designing Documentary" class, several other female students and I made a documentary about men who sell drugs. This is something we see everyday, and most of these people are our friends, classmates, family, and neighbors. This one little documentary changed the way I view society.

From our interviews, I learned that most of the men selling drugs have tried to succeed in life. They have tried to earn a living legally, but society does not see

them as "men of the working field." Many of the men go to school, but they sell drugs to make money for their families. These men have been misled to believe that this is the only way to live, that they will never become a member of the working class.

I was forced to imagine looking for a job, and no one hiring me because of where I came from and what my past mistakes might have been. I was hurt knowing that I could put my all into something and not succeed. This is the country of change and promise, but how can these men change if they are not given the chance?

As I looked at my finished project, it changed my views on the world around me, and how it interacts with different people. These men try and try each day, only to have their dreams shot down. Because of this documentary, I will allow no one to turn me down or prevent me from doing anything that will get me closer to my goals. I will settle for nothing less than the best of what this world has to offer. I will continue to accept all the glorious things and opportunities that this world has put in front of me, and, most of all, I will never let anyone tell me I can't do something because I know I can.



Note from the Director

Dear Friends,

The winter of 2006 has been a special time for both FSM and me personally. On February 20, my wife delivered a baby boy – Roland Henry McCarter. The Free Spirit Media family is growing as well.

New trainees from Chicago's South Side worked with HoopsHIGH this winter in preparation for the upcoming opening of Gary Comer's Youth Center in the Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood; FSM is expanding to run live-event and video production programs there. Our Advanced Crew was wonderful with the new kids, helping instill our culture of professionalism, teamwork, and creativity.

Our HoopsHIGH Advanced Crew also has connected with FSM's participants at North Lawndale College Prep High School at showcases and several exciting NLCP basketball games covered by HoopsHIGH. Our participants, current and former, have come to appreciate FSM and HoopsHIGH as an extended family.



Proud big sister Louise holds new-born Roland Henry McCarter.

They are friends; they challenge and support each other; and they learn from each other's experiences.

The students are motivated by the fact that their work matters. Through our HoopsHIGH show on CAN TV, FSM's PSAs, documentaries, and dramas are finding a diverse and appreciative audience. An estimated 50,000 Chicago cable viewers watch HoopsHIGH every week, and many more see the videos at showcases and festivals. With the generous encouragement of supporters, our participants' work is making a difference in the public sphere.

Even more profoundly, the experience of producing the work is affecting the participants. They are aware, inspired, and committed to exploring their potential. More of our seniors than ever are preparing to study communications in college. I am proud to count such

thoughtful and ambitious young people among our FSM family. I am deeply grateful to everyone who is making this ongoing fulfillment of our mission possible.

Jeff McCarter, *Founder and Executive Director*

TUNE IN to HoopsHIGH!
CAN TV Channel 19, Saturdays at 8 p.m.
(FSM is a CAN TV Community Partner)

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEB SITE!
www.freespiritmedia.org

This newsletter was written and produced by FSM program assistant Megan Sweas.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Please consider making a donation to Free Spirit Media. FSM is supported in part by foundations and contracts, but we also need the supports of individuals. Your contribution will be an investment in our youth - in their skills, their confidence, and their potential.

Thank you all for your interest and support!

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