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New Web Site Provides Space for Seattle Teens to Be Heard

PugetSoundOff.org launches with multimedia competition for youth

SEATTLE—Sept. 22, 2008—Puget Sound teens care deeply about issues that affect our community. To support teens in having their voices heard, the City of Seattle, YMCA of Greater Seattle and the University of Washington today announced the launch of PugetSoundOff.org, a new Web site for area teens to express their thoughts on some of our region's most important issues.

The site is kicking off with a competition for youth to create the best blog, video or song designed to inspire other teens to take interest in local issues. The winners will be announced at the *Sound Off for Action Forum* at the University of Washington's Kane Hall on Thursday, Oct. 30 from 6:30-8 p.m.

PugetSoundOff.org was created by youth for youth ages 13-21. By using multimedia such as blogs, polls, videos, pictures and music, teens will be able to weigh in on local policies, express their opinions and share personal interests such as sports, music, science and social justice causes. The site allows users to engage in discussions, create topic groups, find volunteer opportunities, uncover new local bands and much more. Teens who have been testing the Web site are already using it to discuss issues such as immigration, global warming and poverty in their local communities. More than 300 youth are currently signed up as users on the site.

PugetSoundOff.org's founding organizations are exploring ways to have the Mayor and City Council members participate in the site together with young people. "This is an ideal place for young citizens to engage in civic learning," said Lance Bennett, director of the Center for Communication and Civic Engagement at the University of Washington.

About the Project

PugetSoundOff.org is supported by a partnership between the City of Seattle's Department of Information Technology, the YMCA Greater Seattle's Metrocenter branch and the Center for Communication and Civic Engagement at the University of Washington. It has grown through input from teens and local youth organizations. Initial funding for the project was provided by the city through an agreement with Comcast.

Site Features

- Events calendar
- Photo/art galleries
- Chat forums
- Jobs/internship listings specifically for teens (coming soon)
- Local band directory
- Local youth resources
- Skills training (digital media, information literacy, civic engagement)
- Outlets for youth groups/organizations to present discussion topics or promote their organization
- Personal profile tools (blogs, posts, multimedia)

About the Contest:

The *Sound Off for Action* competition challenges teens to use site to create and post multimedia content to inspire action and raise awareness about important issues facing the Puget Sound-area. Prizes include a mini-laptop, flip video camera and iPod shuffle. The contest is open to all area high-school age teens at no cost through PugetSoundOff.org. The deadline for submissions is Friday, Oct. 17. Winners will be featured on www.seattletimes.com and www.seattlechannel.org.

About the *Sound Off for Action Forum*:

Contest winners will be announced at the *Sound Off for Action Forum* at the University of Washington's Kane Hall on Thursday, Oct. 30 from 6:30-8 p.m. *The Seattle Times* and the University of Washington's Department of Communications are co-sponsoring the competition.

The forum and award event will engage teens, college students and a group of panelists in a discussion about new media, citizen journalism and civic engagement. Panelists include Jim Veseley, editorial page editor of *The Seattle Times*, Tracy Record, editor of the *West Seattle Blog*, and Hanson Hosein, director of the University of Washington's Digital Media Program.

More Information: www.PugetSoundOff.org.

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