

Girls make themselves heard in new film

Jackson Hole
News & Guide
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Who: GAP girls, Jackson Hole Middle School
What: *Hearing Our Voices* film premiere
When: 4:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesday
Where: Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary
How much: Free

By Katy Niner

Instead of a red carpet, the filmmakers made their entrance through a lavender curtain to the sound of cheering peers in a Jackson Hole Middle School classroom.

The fanfare was during a preview party several weeks ago for *Hearing Our Voices*, a documentary that 25 girls from the middle school made about themselves, by themselves, as part of Girls Actively Participating, a free after-school program.

On Tuesday, GAP will host a public premiere of *Hearing Our Voices* from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary. The free event encourages all to come and hear the girls speak about what's important to them.

Through the film, the girls asserted their voices. "Sometimes people think we are not that important," said Yosenia Rodriguez, 12.

Screenwriter. Director. Cinematographer. Editor. These are roles the GAP girls filled during the three-month project. "They truly did all of it," said GAP founder, teacher Amy Manhart.

They are also the roles of local woman who advised the

girls along the way.

Inspired by *Don't Fence Me In: Celebrating Women and Girls of Wyoming*, the documentary produced by The Equipoise Fund, Manhart had a twofold goal for the film project: to introduce the girls to women working in film and media and to create "a public forum for the girls to talk about themselves."

With a grant from the Wyoming Women's Foundation, the documentary project began. Manhart recruited *Don't Fence Me In* executive producer Mickey Babcock, associate producer Amy Brennan McCarthy and cinematographer/editor Leigh Reagan to introduce the girls to the fundamentals of filmmaking.

While GAP meets twice a week (sixth-graders on Tuesday, and seventh- and eighth-graders on Wednesday), the film project met Tuesdays. To start, the girls chose the topics they would explore in their in-

terviews of each other. "It's not very often that we get to talk about ourselves," said Amanda Luman, 12.

Every girl chose a subject important to them: Cailin Deifer, 12, wanted to talk about rock climbing, and Valeria Ramirez, 12, decided to reflect on her childhood in New Mexico.

After writer Meg Daly shared interviewing strategies, the girls came up with questions for each other: Do you have any funny stories?

Who are your friends?

Playwright Micheline Auger

gave tips on dramatic writing, and screened clips from some of her films.

Carrie Noel from the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival trained Yolanda Vazquez, 12, and Danicia Quezada, 12, on digital camera techniques, and they then trained their peers. The two cameras stirred nervousness, often expressed in laughter. Many interviews required several takes.

The girls edited their footage on iMovie, a program new to most. Surprisingly to them, editing took a lot of time and patience. Adding effects and credits also challenged the girls' computer skills. Finishing touches included title frames and outtakes. "I repel technology," said Tea Drew, 11 after having lost many homework assignments on computers. "But this time it actually worked."

As the girls reflected on their experience, GAP volunteer and teacher Kathy Vaughn observed their increased eloquence when speaking about themselves. Filmmaking was a process that challenged them to take risks, she said.

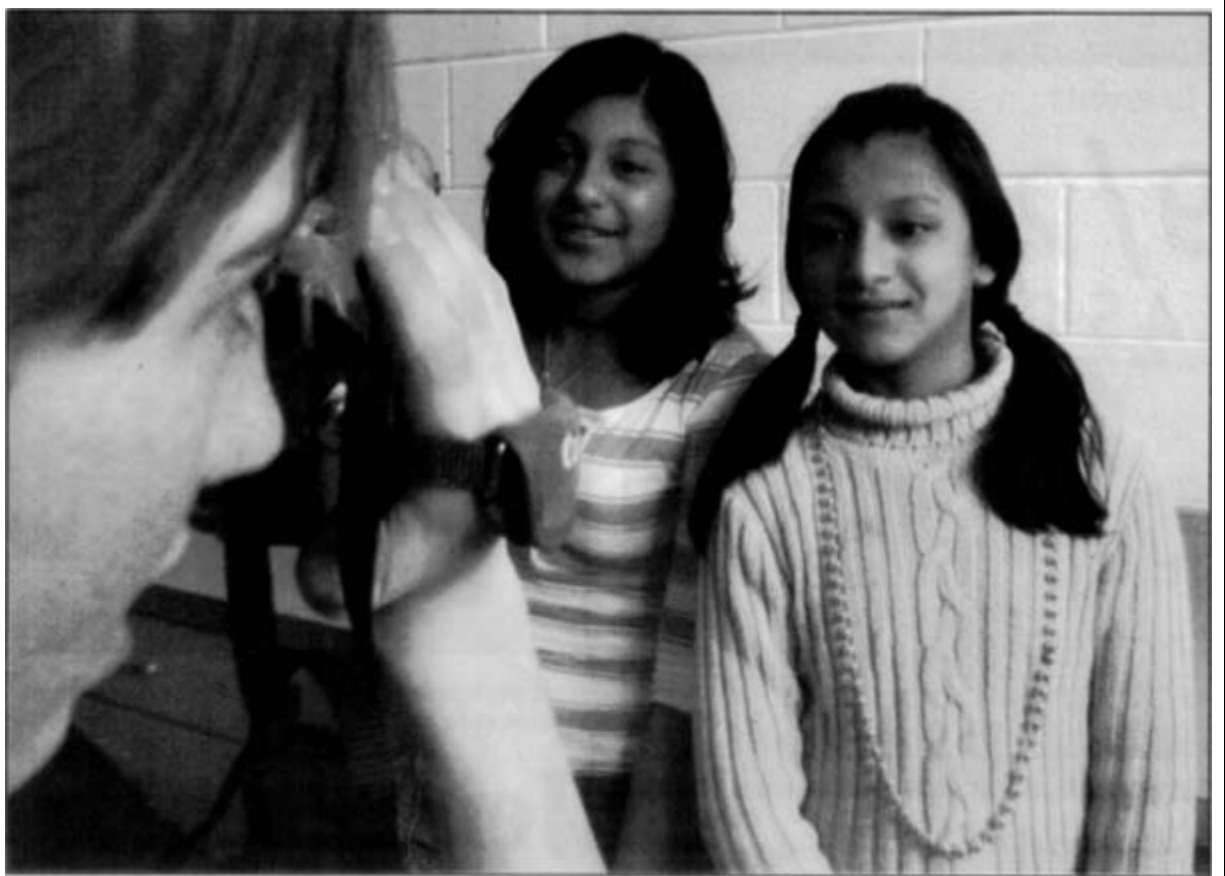
The week before Spring Break, the girls previewed the film together with a party of ice-cream punch and fancy snacks.

The girls' collective assessment of the filmmaking experience: We learned a lot.

Amanda spotlighted another effect of the film: "It was a great opportunity to get to know each other."



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Columbia Eiden films Yolanda Vasquez, left, and Nancy Moreno for a documentary a group of middle school girls made about themselves, by themselves, as part of the after-school program Girls Actively Participating. The film premieres Tuesday at Lyndsay McCandless Contemporary.