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Community Spotlight



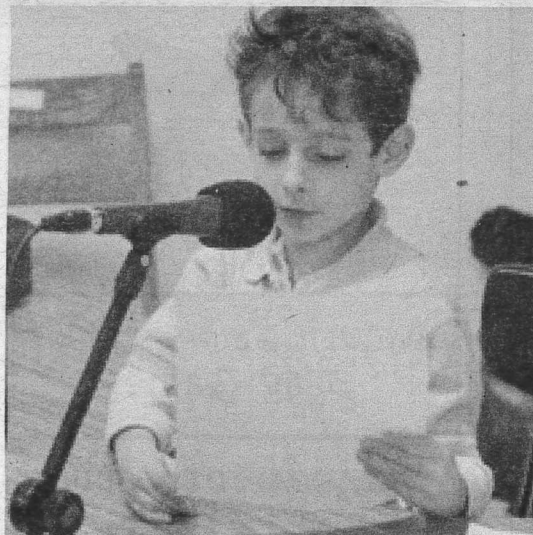
One of the best known institutions in Pittsburgh is Carnegie Mellon University. We would need a *floodlight* to cover all that CMU offers the community so we are going to focus just our *spotlight* on a project that was by dreamt up and made possible by a team from CREATE Lab (Community Robotics, Education and Technology Empowerment) at CMU that captures the kids' voices of this great city allowing all to hear!

The idea behind the project, *Hear Me*, is to make it possible for children and teens to have a voice on subjects that have importance in their lives such as school environment, bullying issues, friendships, teachers, and more.

Using media and technology, *Hear Me*, has created an opportunity for the kids to be heard and understood and that gives them the power to inspire change.

There are many aspects to this project but the main way it works is that kids from all over the Pittsburgh area are currently able to use drawing, audio interviews, video and writing to express themselves. The information is uploaded to the *Hear Me* website making it possible for anyone to view or listen.

The stories are also available through listening stations. The *Hear Me* team at the CREATE Lab made an audio playback device that fits inside a tin can, called CanEx, so that the kids' recorded stories can be heard by other kids and adults. These playback or listening stations are placed in various locations throughout the city such as restaurants, coffee shops, libraries and more. Topics that are covered include anything the kids want like *nutrition*, *neighborhood safety*, *recycling* and more. The ages range from preschool to high school. Everyone's voice matters!



A Hear Me recording being made by a participating child.
~ photo courtesy of hear-me.net

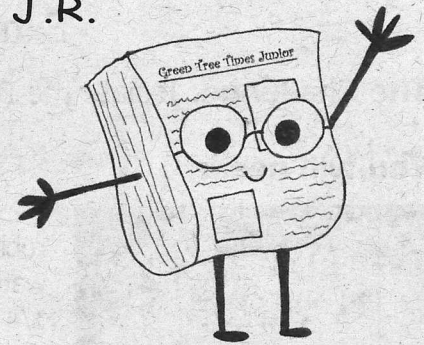
and policy makers to be certain all of the opinions are heard. They will also be available on the *Hear Me* website. All age level students can participate but must have a signed permission slip. The topic will change over the summer to "food security and nutrition." These stories are on the website for listening as well as at the Hear Me Kiosks.

There's so much to this program that needs to be "heard" literally, this article can't capture all that there is, so check out the website and hear for yourself! If this is something in which you want to participate you can email info@hear-me.net or ask your parent, teacher, school principal or local librarian to look into how to get started. All of the details and stories can be found at www.hear-me.net.

The Hear-Me Kiosks will focus on the campaign topic and can be sponsored by individuals or companies. The Green Tree Times Junior is planning to sponsor one and we'll let you know next month where you can listen. Also, starting in April, the GT Times Junior paper will feature excerpts from Hear Me kids' stories each month.

Kids' listening to other kids' can be encouraging, enlightening and empowering and your voice can do that to someone as well, so as they say, "Turn up the Volume" and let your thoughts be heard!

J.R.



Pull me out to read!

artwork created by Lexi Hall



CanEx in action.

~ photo courtesy of hear-me.net

Last year there were billboards throughout the area promoting the project and the kids' artwork and written messages were also on bus stop shelters with direct links to the audio files.

Hear Me is ongoing and offers the opportunity for schools and organizations to get involved by encouraging children to record their thoughts and opinions to be heard by those that can help make change. You can even text HearMe to 25252 and hear a story yourself.

Right now, there is a *Hear Me* campaign going on that has the purpose of trying to collect as many stories as possible on the topic of "school climate." The views expressed are to be honest and can be negative or positive. These stories will be shared with elected officials



A Kiosk that can be sponsored and placed anywhere.