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Students learn about the art of storytelling with Dayton Youth Radio



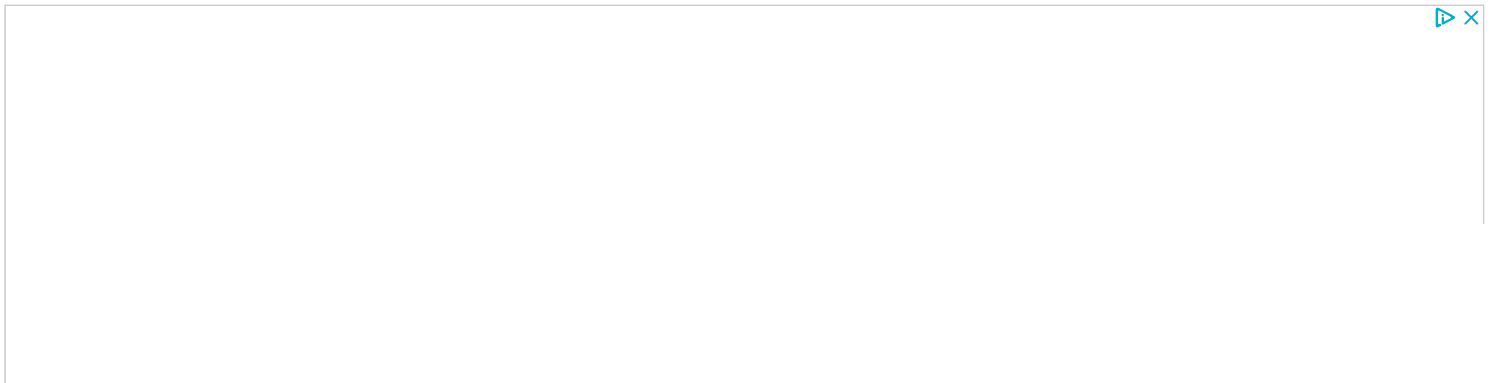
MIAMI VALLEY

By Erica Harrah

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'Radio is the broadcast version of farm-to-table sustenance,' says instructor.

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DAYTON – For the past eight years, Dayton Youth Radio has been giving a voice to local students across the Miami Valley, by helping them to tell their stories as well as learn the fundamentals of broadcasting.

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Founding producer Basim Blunt said that Dayton Youth Radio, an offshoot of the 91.3 WYSO Community Voices program, helps around 45 students tell their stories each year. He said the program got its start in 2013 when he was asked by WYSO General Manager Neenah Ellis to help teach a media interviewing class at the Ponitz Career Technology Center in Dayton. He said he was slightly embarrassed when at the end of the day he realized he had talked with the students about almost everything except media interviewing.

“I thought Neenah would be furious on the ride back to WYSO, but she saw teens really enjoying bantering with this older dude who they saw as just a radio DJ not really a teacher. That’s how Dayton Youth Radio started.”

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Blunt said the program is structured as an 8-week course, where students meet about two hours once a week and learn how to use digital audio recording equipment, take microphones apart, and how to do digital editing and radio production. However, Blunt stressed one of their main goals is to create a safe space where the storytelling takes center stage.

“There are tons of streaming services and apps available to us, but there’s still nothing that connects a person to the intimacy of locally produced radio. To me, radio is the broadcast version of farm-to-table sustenance. It’s important for young people to understand the power and democracy of radio and how it gives free access to every living person on the planet. Using this medium as a way to tell a story, your unique story to just one radio listener is what Dayton Youth Radio is all about.”

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Joanne Casale Viskup, Media Arts instructor with Ponitz Career Technology Center said that Dayton Youth Radio has been offered to students since its beginning and is traditionally a senior project in their Media Arts Pathway.

“Everyone has a story to tell. I want this program to give my students the confidence to tell theirs. I want them to experience taking a project like this from its conception, to the writing process, all the way through to a finished product. It’s also a beautiful thing to see the bonds that are formed between students and between students and instructors.”



Joselyne Kamikazi, a senior at David H. Ponitz Career Training Center, said that the story she chose to tell brought her closer to her family. She said that she came to this country at age 5 and over time lost the memories of her life in her home country and decided to use this opportunity to reconnect with her roots.

“My mom is a powerful, no-nonsense person who doesn’t do small talk and just likes to get things done. So, we’ve never spoken candidly about Africa or traditions or anything. It was cool to actually talk to her and learn about her experience as a woman in a culture that puts men first.

“Also, interviewing my dad, he used to be in local politics in Burundi. So as soon as he saw that I was recording, it was all politician mode. It was funny.”

Centerville High School senior Ella Dapore said that she had always wanted to be on the radio and was excited by the opportunity to participate in Dayton Youth Radio.

“I just thought it would be cool to get my voice out there and touch random strangers, yet go out in public and no one would know it’s you,” said Dapore. She said that she chose to tell the story about her grandfather’s passing and a dream she had about him that she felt gave her the second chance to say goodbye and I love you.

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“My writing this story - believe it or not - changed my relationship with my parents. It gave them a chance to hear my heart; a side of me I tend to keep private. And who knows, my words could’ve helped some people heal, people I don’t even know.”

Tricia Rapoch, Communication Arts teacher at Centerville High School, said even though her students get a lot of experience working at the school’s student-run radio station, she thinks the experience with Dayton Youth Radio is a valuable one.

“They learn that what we do in the classroom, mirrors what is done in the professional world.”

For more information on Dayton Youth Radio or to listen to the student-produced stories, visit www.wyso.org/podcast/dayton-youth-radio or www.wyso.org/shows/community-voices.

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