

ThreeSixty

Growing Journalists. Expanding Perspectives.

The News Around Us

Winter 2010

www.threesixtyjournalism.org

After-school classes give teens a chance to learn journalism skills

By Lynda McDonnell

Teens arrive at the first meeting of News Team, ThreeSixty's introductory journalism program at the Star Tribune and St. Paul Pioneer Press, unsure of what to expect. At its heart, journalism is about telling true stories, usually about matters of public interest. Youth editor Annie Nelson and I list the classic news values – timeliness, proximity, impact and so on.

An hour into our introduction to journalism, we send them out to practice it.

Interviewing strangers is intimidating for new reporters. Taking notes while listening closely and thinking ahead isn't easy either.

[TEENS continued on Back Page](#)



Members of ThreeSixty's editorial board work and play together. After November's meeting, youth editors Mariah Davis, Marian Hussein, YungJen Vang and Sinthia Turcios took in a St. Thomas football game.

ThreeSixty welcomes Erich Mische to board

By Ben Katzner

Erich Mische has been active in government for most of his life. As a member of the White Bear Lake City Council, he fought hard to gain approval for a shelter for abused women. As a chief of staff to U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman, Mische was an important source – and occasionally an adversary – for reporters.

The St. Paul father of two knows that good journalism is necessary to have

[MISCHE continued on Page 2](#)



Youth voices, critical thinking inspire Lida Poletz

By Ka Bao Yang

As a former journalist, Lida Poletz has a strong appreciation for the skills that go into being one. "It requires a critical thinker to know what questions to ask, to put yourself in someone else's shoes and see from their point of view," she said.

Poletz, now a vice president for Weber Shandwick's Bloomington office, will join the ThreeSixty board in January to ensure that those skills are passed on to coming generations.

Poletz earned her degree in journalism at the University of Minnesota and went on to earn master's degrees in journalism and business administration at Columbia University in New York City.

During 10 years as a financial writer, Poletz headed Reuters's foreign exchange reporting team in New York and reported from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. She and her husband, journalist Bob Ingrassia, returned home to Minnesota 6 1/2 years ago. They live in St. Paul and have two small children. At Weber Shandwick, Poletz develops and manages integrated marketing communications campaigns for government and financial services clients.

She believes that the stories produced by ThreeSixty students are important to people of all ages. "Hearing from young people and seeing what they write about is something we don't see or hear about often," she said. "They are facing new issues, and I believe it is important to understand their challenges."



Inside:

Letter from the director
Page 2

Covering a controversial story
Page 3

Alumni updates
Page 4

Widening the Circle
Page 5

Partnerships and innovation mark ThreeSixty's 2009



By Lynda McDonnell

As for most businesses and nonprofits, 2009 has been a challenging year for ThreeSixty. Fundraising has taken more effort.

Partnerships and social networking have become more important. Traditional journalism continues to struggle.

The good news is that ThreeSixty will be around for another year – no small achievement for a small nonprofit that trains teens in journalism. Our success stems from the generosity of our donors and volunteers, the leadership of our board, the creativity and hard work of our staff and the talent and pluck of our students and alumni. I am deeply grateful to you all.

A few weeks back, ThreeSixty Editor Annie Nelson, Marketing Manager Kate Borman and I took a day to review the year and plan for 2010. We tallied our achievements, reviewed our challenges, compared notes with great youth journalism programs in other cities and made plans for the coming year. I'd like to share a little of what we learned:

Compared to other youth journalism programs around the country, we ask a lot of our students, and they deliver. Many youth media programs stress the

personal voice. ThreeSixty expect teens to gather facts and multiple points of view. This prolongs and complicates the process, but it's essential for producing critical thinkers, engaged citizens and future journalists our communities need.

We published more work and served more students. We published 115 student articles during the last school year and have published more than 50 so far this fall. Through our summer camps, after-school News Team, editorial board and other programs, Annie, Dave Nimmer, college-age mentors and I have worked intensely with more than 60 teen writers from a wide range of backgrounds. And six of our alumni are now working in newsrooms from Washington, D.C., to Minneapolis.

We have developed a solid marketing plan and embraced social media. Thanks to the Minnesota Literary Council, which chose ThreeSixty as a site for one of its Americorps VISTA positions, we were able to hire Kate Borman as our marketing manager. Thanks to her marketing savvy and graphics skill, ThreeSixty has an improved e-newsletter and is an active presence on Twitter, MySpace and Facebook. And we have solid plans to build ThreeSixty's visibility and audience next year – including a more interactive

Web site that will debut early in 2010.

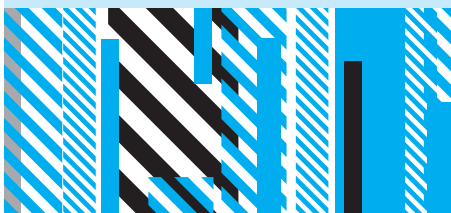
We went to school and learned a lot. Teaching a journalism class at the El Colegio charter school in Minneapolis last spring demonstrated the value of teaching journalistic writing to students with multiple academic and personal challenges. An outside evaluator found that students' writing improved substantially during the semester. We're looking for ways to share curriculum and training with other high schools that want to offer such opportunities to their students.

We forged great partnerships. Support from Best Buy, Dain Rauscher and the Pohlada Family Foundation allowed us to produce some fine work on two important topics – high school dropouts and teens and money. Best Buy's support enabled us to collaborate with and learn from top-notch youth journalism programs in Los Angeles and New York on a powerful package examining why teens drop out and what helps them stay in school. By posting the stories on www.at15.com – Best Buy's Web site for teens – we reached a larger audience.

The economic climate isn't likely to get much easier next year. Expect us to innovate, partner and share the stories that need to be told.

Not receiving ThreeSixty's monthly e-newsletter?

E-mail marketing director Kate Borman at borm3444@stthomas.edu and ask her to send you the monthly update.



MISCHE continued from Page 1

informed and enlightened public debate and decision-making. That knowledge led him to agree to serve a three-year term on the ThreeSixty board beginning this fall.

While journalists and public officials are sometimes at odds, Mische believes that they have more in common than most people think.

"The goals and the objectives are the same, [but] tactics and strategies are different," he said. Cynicism about government, declining audiences for traditional journalism and intense financial pressures on both fields mean "this is a tough time [for everyone]."

Mische is now a senior vice president for mCapitol Management – a government relations and public affairs firm based in Washington, D.C. He believes that journalism should do less shouting and return to more careful, objective analysis.

"The job of a journalist is not simply to report. The job of a journalist is not simply to advocate. The job of a journalist is not to simply analyze," he said. "It's to do all of these."

Mische hopes that as a ThreeSixty board member, he can have some influence on the way young journalists learn the craft. ThreeSixty is a great learning tool, he believes, because it stresses how much work is involved in being a journalist.

"The challenge in a career in journalism is not to cut corners," Mische said. "I want to encourage young people to continue on that path."

AmeriCorps VISTA allows ThreeSixty to beef up marketing and social networking

By Ben Katzner

Since joining ThreeSixty in July as marketing director, AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer Kate Borman has developed a detailed marketing plan and heightened the program's online presence.

"Small nonprofits like ThreeSixty rely tremendously on visibility and reputation to attract funders, volunteers and students," said Lynda McDonnell, ThreeSixty executive director. "Kate is strengthening our communications and social networking to accomplish that."

In her first six months, Borman has retooled ThreeSixty's monthly e-newsletter, increased its activity on Twitter, Facebook and MySpace and helped develop a marketing and communications plan that guides



other marketing efforts.

The 24-year-old grew up in Crystal, Minn., and graduated from the University of Minnesota – Morris in 2008 with a degree in English and minors in African-American studies and studio art. In her first year after graduation, Borman worked as a VISTA volunteer doing marketing and communications for Twin Cities RISE, a nonprofit program that trains low-income adults for better jobs.

She signed up for a second year of VISTA service, which pays volunteers less than \$12,000 for a year of community service work. At the end of their service, they receive

an education grant.

Working with ThreeSixty is a way for Borman to get more experience in what she hopes will be her career someday. "Since I intend to continue working in nonprofits after my term of service, I am seeking out every opportunity to network and build my career," she said. "I was just getting my feet wet and establishing my position in my first term. Now I consciously network and build relationships with other professionals as an effort to best position and market myself for the future."

Borman believes that her background in writing and in art makes her a perfect fit for ThreeSixty. She enjoys being around teens who are passionate about pursuing journalism.

"The teens that I've seen have been really excited about it," she said. "I enjoy it a lot."

ThreeSixty alumnus discovers the challenges and satisfaction of covering a controversial story

By Ibrahim Hirsi

As a Somali journalist, I covered high-profile stories last spring for the University of Minnesota's newspaper – The Minnesota Daily – about several young Somali men who returned to Africa to fight. While reporting these stories, I often felt caught between American readers who thought I was not tough enough on my community and Somalis who felt I was disloyal to it. While some readers accused me of being biased because I'm Somali, some Somalis didn't want the glare of publicity and considered it a betrayal that I wrote about the sensitive issues concerning the Somali community.

For example, I interviewed Sheikh Abdirahman Sheikh Omar Ahmad, imam of Abubakar As-Saddique mosque who was accused of recruiting the men who left. The imam said that the mosque was helping Somali youth to escape from gangs and drugs and to learn about Islam. After the story ran, some readers said my article was too sympathetic just because I interviewed the imam. Others said I supported those who want to destroy the mosque just because I titled my online story "A mosque under fire." The title



was too sensitive and gave the "enemy" a feeling that they were winning their battle against the mosque, they said.

There were times when many people, including some University of Minnesota students who are related to the missing men, declined to speak with me. But being Somali and knowing the language, culture and people gave me an advantage in covering the story. It was not easy finding sources, but some talked to me because they trusted me more than non-Somali reporters.

I worked to find the truth and to talk to all sides. That was often hard. Students whom the FBI interrogated were eager to talk to me. Some accused the FBI of harassing them simply because they were Somali. But when I tried to speak with the FBI, the agents always declined to speak to me. As a result, my stories provided more information from the students. Because of this, some readers called my articles unbalanced.

Meanwhile, many from my community approached me and told me I was endanger-

ing the entire community's future by writing about these issues. They thought these stories would create suspicion in the minds of those they work with and would jeopardize their jobs and lives in America. Others wanted to know why I haven't reported on the community's success stories – the thousands of Somali students who every year graduate from high schools, colleges and universities.

I told them that it is my job to write newsworthy stories and that writing about Somali graduates is not as important as the stories I was covering. I also told them that I could write only one story a week, and for this reason I had picked up the most interesting story. I told them my job is not about revealing my community's success or dark stories but about learning how to become a better reporter.

I learned that no one can satisfy all readers, especially in a story as complicated as this one. I consider myself a journalist first and foremost, and therefore, it was my obligation to the university community to bring stories that were relevant to them. Despite the online comments, I kept moving on and tried to produce balanced stories.

ALUMNUS continued on Page 5

Alumni updates

2001

Hlee Lee works as an associate producer at Twin Cities Public Television's Minnesota Productions division. She works with local organizations on documentary-style shows, including the mini-series "Close the Gap" and "Getting There."

2002

Aisha Eady received a two-month fellowship from the Academy for Alternative Journalism. She spent two months this summer writing and reporting in Chicago with 10 other fellows and faculty at Northwestern University.

Laura Lee, an assistant producer at KSTP-TV, gave birth to Konur Nujtxheeg, her third child and first son.

Emma Carew graduated from the University of Minnesota and is a database reporter for the Chronicle of Higher Education in Washington, D.C.

2003

Brittany Lewis graduated from Macalester College and started working on a Ph.D. in the feminist studies program at the University of Minnesota. She received the Diversity of Voices and Experiences Fellowship.

Dhomonique Ricks graduated from the University of Missouri and is working as a reporter at WSET, ABC 13, in Lynchburg, Va. She loves it.

2005

Tanya Bui is a sophomore at Carleton College. Last year she worked with the student publication The Carletonian.

Dymanh Chhoun completed his associate degree at Normandale Community College and is studying journalism at the University of Minnesota. He worked as a ThreeSixty intern last spring.

Sage Davis completed her associate degree at Leech Lake Tribal College and is a junior at the University of Minnesota – Morris. She plans to major in mass communications.

Chandler Sentell is a junior at the University of St. Thomas majoring in broadcast journalism. He was a summer intern at KARE-11.

Ian Yue worked for the third summer for KFAI-FM in Minneapolis as part of a four-summer program through the Emma L. Bowen Foundation for Minority Interests in Media. This fall he's a junior at Wheaton College in Illinois, where he's the managing editor for The Pub Press, Wheaton's independent, student-run journal.

2006

Frank Bi graduated from Eden Prairie High School and attends the University of Minnesota, where he is a reporter for the Minnesota Daily.

Ibrahim Hirsi won an award from AAJA for his reporting on the disappearance of young Somali men in the Twin Cities. (See article on page 3.)

Mai Cha Vang won a Young Scholars award and an undergraduate fellowship from the University of St. Thomas to support her psychology research related to girls and women.

2007

Tiana Daun, Teddy Woodward and Belle Lin attend the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

Aimee Cote is a freshman at the University of St. Thomas this fall.

Ben Pearce is a freshman at the University of Minnesota.

Trisure Perez lives in Colorado Springs, Colo. with her mom, daughter and husband. She's studying digital photography in college and will intern with a local portrait photography studio next semester. Her husband recently returned from a tour in Iraq.

Kyla Riley will be a junior at St. Olaf College and worked last summer for the TRIO programs, which help students overcome class, social and cultural barriers to higher education. She is the coordinator for the school's Diversity Celebrations Committee this year.

Alexandra Sifferlin is a sophomore at Northwestern University in Illinois, where she is a section editor and Web editor for Abroad View, a magazine that encourages students to think about global issues and about studying abroad. She interned last summer for the City of Edina communications and marketing

department and for Tiger Oak Publications in downtown Minneapolis.

Matt Smith is a sophomore majoring in magazine journalism at Drake University in Des Moines. He was the assistant editor of DrakeMag, Drake's online magazine, and will be a section editor for the magazine this year.

Dannah Waukazo is a sophomore this fall at the University of St. Thomas, where she's majoring in political science and minoring in justice and peace studies.

2008

Drew Bryant attends Hampton University, where he plans to major in business and marketing or management. He received the Gates scholarship, which will pay for his college through graduate school.

Maggie Clemenson received the ThreeSixty scholarship to the University of St. Thomas and started this fall.

Leah Sorenson won top honors in the Walker Art Center's teen photo competition for photos she took for ThreeSixty during protests at the Republican National Convention. She received a \$1,500 scholarship.

David Lurvey worked as a summer intern at the Minneapolis Television Network and is studying filmmaking at Ithaca College in Ithaca, N.Y.

Sadiya Mohamed made a radio documentary for Minnesota Public Radio about her struggle to learn English since coming to the United States five years ago. She graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School and will attend North Hennepin Technical College in January.

Ariel Nash worked as an intern for ThreeSixty this summer and attends the University of Winnipeg in Canada. She worked last summer as a reporter for ThreeSixty.

Va Meng Thao attends the University of Minnesota and plans to major in something science-related.

Cory Weaver attends Iowa State and received a four-year scholarship valued at \$18,000. He plans to major in mass communications and journalism with a minor in Spanish.

November event featured Sports Illustrated writer

More than 230 people attended ThreeSixty's annual Widening the Circle fundraiser on Nov. 6 to hear Selena Roberts, senior writer for Sports Illustrated, describe why it's important for journalists to investigate the money and people involved in professional sports. The annual event at the University of St. Thomas raised more than \$7,000 to support the youth journalism program.

When Roberts and another SI reporter broke the story about steroid use by Yankee player Alex Rodriguez, other players thanked her, she said, because they believe the rules must be the same for all players.

Ruben Rosario, columnist for the St. Paul Pioneer Press, and Stanley S. Hubbard, chairman and CEO of Hubbard Broadcasting, received Widening the Circle awards for making exceptional contributions to support the next generation of journalists. WCCO anchor Angela Davis Drew emceed the event.



Clockwise from above: Dr. Robert Brown and Dave Nimmer, both emeritus professors at the University of St. Thomas, enjoyed the chance to meet ThreeSixty students and supporters. Selena Roberts of Sports Illustrated was the keynote speaker for the Nov. 6 fundraiser. Executive Director Lynda McDonnell and Star Tribune columnist Neal Justin were among the guests at the Nov. 6 event.

ALUMNUS continued from Page 3

I learned how to approach people to develop more sources and also to ask for evidence when people accused others. Whenever one group accused another, I contacted the other group and asked for comment on the accusation.

Covering the issue was the most challenging thing I have ever dealt with, but I feel great about the in-depth reports on this issue which I contributed to the Minnesota Daily. As a Somali man trained in journalism, I was able to find important sources that other reporters would have had difficulty obtaining. My unique perspective and knowledge of the Somali language resulted in balanced reports with a variety of voices. The challenges and pressures I faced were beyond my expectations, but they became lessons that strengthened my journalistic skills.

Ibrahim Hirsi is a junior at the University of Minnesota, where he is majoring in journalism. He was in ThreeSixty's summer camp in 2006 and can be reached at Hirsi004@umn.edu.

ThreeSixty

ThreeSixty staff:

Lynda McDonnell, executive director
lmcconnell@stthomas.edu
Annie Nelson, youth publications editor
annie.nelson@stthomas.edu
Kate Borman, marketing manager
kborm3444@stthomas.edu
Ka Bao Yang and Ben Katzner, student assistants

Visit us at

www.threesixtyjournalism.org

ThreeSixty's mission: ThreeSixty Journalism is committed to bringing diverse voices into journalism and related professions and to using intense, personal instruction in the craft and principles of journalism to strengthen the civic literacy, writing skills and college-readiness of Minnesota teens.

ThreeSixty board:

Duchesne Drew, Star Tribune
Thom Fladung, St. Paul Pioneer Press
Dr. Dina Gavrilos, University of St. Thomas
Doug Hennes, University of St. Thomas
Denise Johnson-Oliver, Star Tribune
Scott Libin, WCCO-TV
Chris Malecek, Weber Shandwick
Erich Mische, mCapitol Management
Lida Poletz, eber Shandwick

GiveMn.org makes online giving easy

Giving online to support ThreeSixty's work with teen journalists became easier this fall, thanks to innovative work by more than 20 Minnesota companies and foundations.

GiveMN.org allows Minnesotans to research more than 36,000 state charities, religious congregations and nonprofits from one Web site. As donors contribute

to favorite causes, GiveMN creates their individual giving portfolios that track contributions by agency, category and dollar value. The site makes fundraising more convenient for donors and less expensive than direct mail or phone solicitations for charities.

On Nov. 17, the launch date for the site, several state foundations offered to

match \$500,000 in donations to Minnesota nonprofits. More than \$14 million was contributed statewide that day, including nearly \$4,000 to ThreeSixty.

To donate to ThreeSixty, go to givemn.org, enter ThreeSixty in the search line and follow directions from there. Your full donation goes directly to support our work.

TEENS continued from Page 1

But journalism is like swimming: First, you must get in the water.

In Minneapolis, our first class was Monday, Oct. 5, the day of the first Vikings-Packers game. The Star Tribune building was surrounded by tailgating fans wearing purple and white or green and gold and happy to talk to teenagers with notebooks and questions.

Want descriptive writing? Try this: "Outside the Metrodome the bustling and rainy city streets were filled with the scent of hot dogs and sweet, delicious rivalry."

In St. Paul, our first meeting was a week before Thanksgiving, so our posse of reporters asked the good citizens of St. Paul what they were grateful for. When they returned a half-hour later, their faces were flooded with relief and excitement. Most had enough in their notebooks to write a few

paragraphs.

They discovered Mr. G, a dapper 65-year-old who greets people near the escalator at Macy's. He said he is grateful that Parkinson's disease hasn't limited his mobility too severely.

The exercise teaches important first lessons: Stories are everywhere. Most people are willing to talk to reporters. If you didn't get the speaker's name, you can't use the quote. If you didn't ask, you can't assume. And journalism is built on trust that you ask, listen, observe and write with precision and heart.

We're always looking for ways to introduce more teens to the rigor and discipline of journalism. With funding from the F. R. Bigelow Foundation and the Northwest Area Foundation, we're able this year to offer basic training each week to up to 15 teens in each location. With support from the Star Tribune and Pioneer Press, we use their

training rooms and draw on the expertise of their reporters, editors and photographers.

Once News Team students learn the basics, each will write an article about something that fascinates them. The current batch ranges from a piece about how girls are comparing their boyfriends to Edward, the vampire-hero of the Twilight books, to a piece about how cuts in school bus service will affect Minneapolis teens next fall.

For many students, this introduction will satisfy their curiosity about journalism. For others, this will be the first step on a path into a future career.

The Minneapolis News Team meets at the Star Tribune from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. every Monday. The St. Paul News Team meets at the Pioneer Press from 4 to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays. Interested teens can apply at www.threesixtyjournalism.org.