



'Zine' trend catches on at school

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Kyle Fisher thinks the social hierarchy at his school "stinks." Nina Franz feels politics shouldn't ruin friendships. Tom Schwallie believes Bush and Kerry's agendas are eerily familiar.

But without a collective voice, how can they make themselves heard above traditional media?

By making "zines."

What are zines? What they are not is a passing craze. Anne Elizabeth Moore and Jason Kucsma are crisscrossing the country passing on tips to help youth speak their minds through hand-made and self-funded publications, dubbed "zines," short for magazine.

Zines are shaped from a blank piece of standard paper and folded into a pint-sized booklet. For art, materials such as magazine clippings, photos or hand-drawn cartoons are used -- pretty much anything that lends itself to the message. The satire-laden books are tiny, but can carry a big punch.

Moore and Kucsma recently hosted a crash course in zine-making at the Urban Institute for Contemporary Art. In three hours, eight participants were tutored in zine-ology, including cutting and folding the paper, coming up with a theme and mass-producing the final works.

The youngest participant, 13-year-old Kyle, pawed through a stack of magazines for an image of singer Britney Spears to paste onto his zine, entitled Your Pants Are On Fire. Kyle's older brother Jamie and friend Jennifer Wolf collaborated on one zine.

"Britney Spears is kind of creepy," Jamie Fisher said.

"But we need her head," said Kyle.

"Yeah, on a stick," Jamie Fisher retorted.

And so went the round-table chat that ranged from political rhetoric to social mores. Kyle's zine allowed the eighth-grader to blow off steam about being bullied and labeled as a nerd by classmates.

"Zines are a resource guide to help ordinary people change things that bug them," Moore said. "It could be politics, a neighborhood watch system, the school lunch menu or even who walks the dog."

Moore, from Seattle, has written and self-published "Hey Kidz Buy This Book: A Radical Primer on Corporate and Governmental Propaganda and Artistic Activism for Short People."

Kucsma, from Toledo, Ohio, is the author of the anthology, "The Zine Yearbook Volume 8: A Year

in the Life of the Underground Press."

He also is the editor of Clamor, The Revolution of Everyday Life magazine.

Moore's book tour caught the attention of Kucsma and friend, Jeff Smith, a staffer for Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy, an affiliate of Community Media Center.

Kucsma and Smith met a few years ago at a zine convention in Bowling Green, Ohio.

They invited Moore to host the session Sunday and passed out pamphlets.

"You can create something that's going to not only inform people but prick their conscious as to why they should be interested in these important issues," Smith said.

"It's a practical way to communicate because a lot of people aren't going to read lengthy reports or books."

Depending on who you ask, the origin of zine making dates back to the punk rock "fanzines" of the 1970s, the underground newspapers and comics of the 1960s, and even as far back as the Revolutionary War.

Some liken early books of the Bible to zine style.

Upon completion, the group that met Sunday made photocopies of their creations and folded them neatly into zine form.

Before leaving, they introduced their themes and exchanged them with one another.

For more information and links to making and sharing zines, you can visit Moore's Web site at www.heykidz.org or Kucsma's at www.clamormagazine.org.

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