

Students help teenagers air perspectives on radio

BY ALEXIS BASS
THE GAMECOCK

USC student co-hosts are reaching out to the youth of America through Teen Forum, a weekly feature of America's Radio Show with Andy Thomas. Aired throughout the Carolinas on six radio stations and the Internet, this forum gives teens a chance to voice opinions on events and issues affecting them.

Mike Thomas, a third-year marketing student and executive producer of the show, thought up the show.

Started after an offer from his father, Andy Thomas, in 2000, the concept of a "Real World" format became the initial building block for the forum.

"It's like Jerry Springer without the throwing of chairs," Thomas said.

The show is produced, run and co-hosted by nine teenagers representing diverse ethnic groups, opinions and values.

"We try to appeal to every teenager," Thomas said.

The show's goal is to give teens a voice and provide exposure to a new form of self-expression. Broadcasts are held outside of the studio at high schools and colleges around the Carolinas. Presbyterian College recently held a broadcast from the campus PIKE fraternity house, and the S.C. Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities also held a forum talent show and debate on funding for the arts.

Today, the show will play host to a show from Richland Northeast High School. First-year theatre student and co-host Dan Fenner said he enjoys expressing himself on issues about substance abuse.

"I think the Teen Forum is a great experience. It makes you more aware of what is around you," Fenner said.

An aspiring actor, Fenner has been able to do voice-overs in promotional and public relations work for Teen Forum.

"I love to perform, and whether that's on a stage or radio it is still beneficial," he said.



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK
From left, Justin Turner, Chris Whitmire, Nic Stratton, Shantel Brown and Dan Fenner chat on the air during Teen Forum.

Assistant producer Justin Turner, a third-year electronic journalism student, has been involved with radio since his freshman year in high school.

"Being a producer is an everyday job. It is a great pleasure of mine to work here. It is something I would recommend to anyone interested in broadcast journalism," Turner said.

Second-year electronic journalism student and co-host Shantel Brown said he enjoys current issues and local government discussions.

"It always leaves an impact on me when co-hosts can't even get a word in," Brown said.

A segment of the radio show called Radio Star Search is looking for anyone interested in working with Teen Forum. Students looking for a summer internship or a fall job can contact Mike Thomas or Justin Turner at 255-8013.

The Teen Forum airs in Columbia on ESPN 1230 AM Wednesdays from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and can be heard online at www.teenforumshow.com.

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