

Bridgeport Video Center

The Bridgeport Community Video Center, initially a student's independent study project at the University of Bridgeport, is both a community video project and a journalism course. Since CATV is coming to Bridgeport within the next year, our goal is to inform our East Side neighborhood and the greater Bridgeport community of the potential for local programming on "public access" cable T.V. Through the University A-V Center, blank tapes, two half-inch SONY portapak, one monitor, editing facilities and technical help are available. Staff of the bilingual community newspaper, *Harambee*, has provided additional tapes, a "home" from which to operate and community contacts.

Originally, we worked in small groups with NYC-CYO, teaching young people to tutor others; with Blessed Sacrament summer camp, training counselors to work with camp children; and with Upward Bound, a pre-college summer camp for the disadvantaged. First, we just let them see what video could do. They laughed when they first saw themselves on tape; but few questioned the technology that makes it all possible. Soon, individual adults expressed an interest in learning the process and we conducted individual evening workshops. (Adults were more surprised that tapes were not as mysterious and technical as they thought.)

New workshops were arranged as the work spread further. Community leaders were trained on the equipment and realized the "information" potential when they saw their own tapes. Spreading knowledge of East Side problems, people problems that would never be seen on broadcast T.V., is a commonly shared goal. Cameras on the street are no longer unusual. Included in our new workshops were Hall Neighborhood House, a group of young guys who showed interest right from the start, and

the Puerto Rican Youth Organization, whose membership ranges in age from six to twelve. Just beginning is a workshop with staff members from Bridgeport Public Library, who are taping story hours and book talks, and making the library facility available as a center for community showings.



Our current activities include taping a play about life in the ghetto, written by a teacher in the Bridgeport school system and enacted by youth groups with whom we have been working. We will also be making both a taped and social history documentary of the project.

People interested in borrowing tapes can contact Mary Smith, 81 White Street, Bridgeport, Connecticut 06610 (203/367-9124)

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