Zoe Loranger and her sister BreAnna, right, of Skamania County, work as volunteers at KBOO FM radio in Portland. They form the core of the station’s Youth Collective, which produces monthly shows on public affairs and music. BreAnna Loranger, below, a 2007 Clark College graduate, often speaks on the air as a contributor to the KBOO FM program “The Underground.”

Sisters behind MICROPHONE

By MILL REINERT
for The Columbian

PORTLAND — BreAnna Loranger encountered a hitch just 10 minutes before she was supposed to go on the air with “The Underground,” a monthly radio program produced by KBOO FM’s Youth Collective.

“We’re having a little difficulty finding the theme song,” said Erin Yanke, the Collective’s adult adviser.

Clutching her run sheet for the hourlong program, Loranger, 20, scurried around the corner into a sound booth to find the CD.

It was just another last-minute detail for Loranger, a 2007 Clark College graduate. She located the theme song just in time. As she queued it up, the bare bulb outside the door blamed red and a husk fell over the studio.

Showtime.

Headphones clamped over her neck-length brown curls, Loranger read a hand-scrawled introduction and teasers to the upcoming hour’s segments into one of the booth’s three microphones. The theme: “Chasing the world.”

They run the show for KBOO FM’s youth programs.

SISTERS, Page D6

ONLINE VIDEO: Watch sisters BreAnna and Zoe Loranger keep two of KBOO’s radio shows running at www.columbian.com/fullmedia
Features

Sisters:

From Page D1

She and her 10-year-old sister, Zoe, form the core of KBOO’s Youth Collective, which produces two programs a month.

The volunteer Youth Collective gives KBOO a means to integrate young people into its programming. The station invites students and young adults to join the Youth Collective and then trains the volunteers to produce "The Underground," a show that covers social issues, and "Youth Randomness," which covers the local music scene.

With the Loranger sisters' involvement, the station also got its own unusual sister act from Skamania County.

While some politically-minded young people tap out blogs, the sisters funneled their creativity and convictions into volunteering at the nonprofit, left-leaning Portland radio station.

The pair have learned a lot about radio, but even more about how to support each other and work fast to cope with the unexpected.

As BreAnna spoke on the air for the "Changing the World" show, Zoe walked in the hall, alternately conferring with contributors about their scheduled segments and checking in on the news.

"The Underground," Zoe shares engineering duties—ensuring programs and news on air schedule, queuing music and checking microphones—her older sister.

An older boy asked Zoe if she could get his unfinished piece on the air if she finished editing it before the hour ended. Zoe told him to try, and rolled her eyes with a nervous giggle that echoed for sisters.

As BreAnna prepared to interview a representative from Advocacy for Incarcerated Youth, a local nonprofit, Zoe and her friend squeezed into a weathered wheelchair chair in front of the control board and queued up the next segment.

At one point, a dozen contributors, station staff and onlookers packed into the booth. Captivated by the intensity, a boy murmured to himself: "I like this place."

The Loranger sisters, mostly by default, assume much of the responsibility for planning "The Underground," a task that could best be described as coordinating a themed audio potpourri.

"No one wants to do it," BreAnna said. "We want to give everyone a chance to engineer or produce, but then we might have to go on air and there's no run sheet."

Zoe added: "It can get a little last-minute."

BreAnna and Zoe's mom, Lori Loranger, often witnesses the frenetic activity. She shuttles Zoe to the station from their Skamania County home on Wednesday nights.

Watching from the hall, Lori Loranger learned with pride and amusement during the broadcast.

"I like to see (BreAnna and Zoe) doing real life things," she said. "I feel like my kids are safe here. It's a wonderful atmosphere."

Activists run in the family. Lori Loranger ran unsuccessfully for the state Legislature as a Libertarian in 2001. She serves on the board of the co-owned Vancouver Food Co-op.

"Growing up in a liberal-radicall diametrical household definitely influences your views about everything," BreAnna said. "I'm interested in the big ideas that KBOO supports. I'm reticent group's voice. I'm interested in the big ideas that KBOO supports. You're not playing on the left liberal.

BreAnna and her older sister, Amber, joined the collective a few years ago as a student who was already involved interviewed them for a story about the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, which they attended.

Since then, BreAnna has not only familiarized herself with Federal Communications Commission guidelines but also written an engineering manual for the station as her senior project.

In addition to learning interviewing, field recording, producing and fundraising, skills, BreAnna has learned how to manage her crew of young contributors.

Branding a clipboard at a monthly planning meeting in January, BreAnna sat at a huge, battered wooden table littered with organic Plateau Lazy sofa, patio mats, Guitar Heer and Dioritos.

Her goal for the meeting was to get the youngsters, perched in folding chairs and draped on a huge sofa, to commit to producing enough segments to fill the group's monthly hour on the air.

Past programs have addressed drug use, violence, and racial and ethnic heritage. Individual pieces range from political commentary and poetry to interviews both whimsical and serious.

For February's theme of books, one boy wanted to produce a show about spending the night at Powell's City of Books as a how-to-down, the feasibility of which sparked a lively debate.

When a discussion went off track, BreAnna abruptly steered it back.

"That's totally unrelated," she declared, "so we're gonna' get back to the meeting."

Later, she acknowledged, "I tend to judge people in situations like this. It really, really bugs me, when you (only) have an hour to get this done."

Although BreAnna is preparing to bow out of her leadership role—she's the oldest member of the collective—she plans to continue building on her years of experience.

Since earning her GED and an associate degree in arts from Clark College in 2007, BreAnna has been working at a Northeast Portland day care center and an assistant manager of Righteous Pool in Vancouver.

BreAnna plans to pursue a degree in early childhood education. She also wants to remain active at KBOO, where she also helps out in the news department.

"I hope to stay in radio," said BreAnna. "It would be awesome if I got a job doing that."

Zoe, the younger Loranger sister, works as a receptionist at KBOO, just enjoys the social atmosphere.

"I like radio, but I like it mostly because of KBOO," said Zoe. "I think the school is kind of quiet everybody here."

"Whether she intends to or not, Zoe will no doubt end up taking on more leadership responsibilities. She never planned to speak out on air, but a station veteran recruited her on a moment's notice, sat her down in front of a mic and ordered her to start raising money. Initially terrified, she just began guffawing.

"So I helped out on the pledge drive," she said with a giggle. "Now I can talk on the radio."