



Photos by STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Zoë Loranger and her sister BreAna, 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. BreAna Loranger, below, a 2007 Clark College graduate, often speaks on the air as a contributor to the KBOO FM program "The Underground."



Zoë Loranger, 10, right, talks to her friend Kallisti Kendley-Lundberg as they work on the radio show "The Underground." Among Zoë's responsibilities are engineering duties, which involve ensuring programs air on time, music is queued and microphones are checked.



Sisters behind MICROPHONE

By BILL REINERT
for The Columbian

PORTLAND — BreAna 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 blazed red and a hush 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: "Changing the world."

They run the show for KBOO FM's youth programs

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ONLINE VIDEO: Watch sisters BreAna and Zoë Loranger keep two of KBOO's radio shows running at www.columbian.com/multimedia

Sisters:

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She and her 10-year-old sister, Zoë, 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 Randomonium," 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 online blogs, the sisters funnel 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 BreAna spoke on the air for the "Changing the world," show, Zoë waited in the hall, alternately conferring with contributors about their scheduled segments and cavorting with a friend.

Along with contributing to "The Underground," Zoë shares engineering duties — ensuring programs and intros air on schedule, queuing music and checking microphones — with her older sister.

An older boy asked Zoë if he could get his unfinished piece on the air if he finished editing it before the hour ended. Zoë told him to try, and rolled her eyes with a nervous giggle that echoes her sister's.

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

At one point, a dozen contributors, station staff and on-lookers 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



STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

"The Underground," a task that could best be described as coordinating a themed audio potluck.

"No one wants to do it," BreAna said. "We want to give everyone a chance to engineer or produce, but then we might have 20 minutes to go on air and there's no run sheet."

Zoë added, "It can get a little fast-paced."

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

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

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

Activism runs in the family. Lori Loranger ran unsuccessfully for the state Legislature as a Libertarian in 2000. She serves on the board of the nascent Vancouver Food Co-op.

"Growing up in a liberal-radical household definitely influences your views about everything," BreAna said. "I'm interested in the 'lefty' ideals that KBOO supports, like giving minority groups a voice. I do not, however, enjoy lengthy political discussions or far-left liberals."

BreAna and her older sister, Amber, joined the collective after a schoolmate who was already involved interviewed them for a story about the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, which they attended.

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

Did you know?

■ KBOO, Portland's community radio station, is at 90.7 on the FM dial and streams online at kboo.org.

■ The station's Youth Collective produces two shows a month: "The Underground," a public-affairs program, airs at 6-7 p.m. every fourth Wednesday; "Youth Randomonium" highlights original music by Portland-area youth at 11 p.m.-midnight on the last Friday of each month.

project.

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

Brandishing a clipboard at a monthly planning meeting in January, BreAna sat at a huge, battered wooden table littered with organic Fizzie Lizzy soda pop, trail mix, Gummi Bears and Doritos.

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 story about spending the night at Powell's City of Books as a stowaway, the feasibility of which sparked a lively debate.

When a discussion went off

track, BreAna 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 nudge people in situations like that. That really, really bugs me, when you (only) have an hour to get this down."

Although BreAna 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, BreAna has been working at a Northeast Portland day care center and as assistant manager of Hough Pool in Vancouver. BreAna 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 BreAna. "It would be awesome if I got a job deejaying."

Zoë, who also volunteers as a receptionist at KBOO, just enjoys the social atmosphere for now.

"I like radio, but I like it mostly because of KBOO," said the home-schooled fifth-grader. "My favorite thing about working here is just knowing everybody here."

Whether she intends to or not, Zoë may well end up taking on more leadership responsibilities. She never planned to speak 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 gabbing.

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

Zoë Loranger, left, her sister BreAna and friend Kallisti Kendley-Lundberg, right, work as volunteers on a KBOO FM public affairs program.