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PR students promoting performance for school

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Abstract: Hoping to get a real-world feel for the world of public relations, the class has adopted a school production, "Drama of the Body: A Performance for the Deaf," and helped promote the show by contacting politicians, campus officials and the press.

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Full text: Staff Writer

HILLSBOROUGH - Amy Ortiz will be looking for this story.

A student in Hillsborough resident Midge Guerrero's Grass Roots Public Relations class at Rutgers University, she pitched the idea - or at least something similar.

Hoping to get a real-world feel for the world of public relations, the class has adopted a school production, "Drama of the Body: A Performance for the Deaf," and helped promote the show by contacting politicians, campus officials and the press.

"I think the only way you can learn some of the skills you need to be a publicist is to actually do it," said Guerrero, adding that the class had the dual goal of promoting the show and the Undergraduate Arts Management Program.

The class has contacted more than 18 media outlets, Guerrero said, hoping to get some ink in papers ranging from the Kearny Observer to The New York Times.

One twist for the promoters: The performance is meant for people with hearing loss. So Guerrero's group also contacted about 20 schools for those with impaired hearing to reserve all of the show's 130 free seats.

The idea to promote the program came from a conversation between Guerrero and theater professor David Boles, whose office is next to hers.

The show - to be held from noon to 1 p.m. on Dec. 10 at Bradley Hall on the Rutgers Newark campus - tells the story of a deaf child who searches for love and acceptance. Boles wrote and directed the show.

The piece is being performed by at least six actors from a class Boles is teaching on performing for a deaf audience. In that vein, there are no speeches and no music in the show. It's performed entirely with physical gestures.

"It's all miming and it's all suggested," Boles said.

The production is doubly important for Ortiz, a junior art major, who will be displaying some of her paintings in the lobby before the production. Ortiz, a surrealist painter who hopes to one day open her own gallery, said the class is giving her skills that may one day be vital to her dream.

"I used to think that the media and the people are kind of like a boundary," she said. "Before, I had no clue. At least now I have my feet wet."

For Guerrero, who runs The Guerrero Huber Group Inc., a consulting firm in Somerville with her husband, Jack Huber, the skills Ortiz is learning are the same that she's learned by doing her job.

Guerrero recalled one student being told by a New York Times editor that the publicity release had been sent to the wrong department.

"In the beginning I made all these mistakes," Guerrero said, "and that's how I learned."

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