

## Local high schoolers' 'Easy Breathers' video will have national distribution

By Sharon Gibson

Other than review by teachers, parents and classmates, most high school class projects are pretty much an in-house affair. But students from Marshall, Rufus King and North Division high schools are producing an educational video that has been earmarked for distribution to schools throughout the country.

The video project, "Easy Breathers," a collaborative effort by MPS students and teen-agers from high schools in Chicago, San Jose and Houston, examines air quality and the transportation issues that affect it.

About 30 to 35 students are involved in the project.

Grants and in-kind donations totalling \$350,000 to \$400,000 for the video and an associated Web site have been provided by the Department of Natural Resources, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Transportation.

Part of the project's funding package includes \$10,000 which Midwest Express Airlines donated towards travel expenses.

Overseeing "Easy Breathers" is John Holmes, who is a teacher and director of Marshall's Eagle Wing Productions.

He said the juniors and seniors in his advanced video production class have the opportunity to work with state-of-the-art equipment and professionals from Media Makers who serve as the students' mentors.

Holmes said the video will tell students around the country how transportation affects the quality of the air they breathe.

"It will be a very high-quality video and it's a wonderful opportunity for the students to work with the community and professionals."

The students have been busy with the pre-production phase of the project which primarily involves research and writing. One aspect of the project is tracking down manufacturers of environmentally friendly electric cars.

So, far the teen-agers have zeroed in on Corbin Motors of San Jose, which produces the electric Sparrow. A group of students from the project will be visiting San Jose to do conduct taping and interviews with the automaker some time in May.

Holmes said the DNR plans to refer the students to other such manufacturers as GM, Honda and Mercedes-Benz.

Another production crew will be visiting Houston, which now outranks Los Angeles as having the

worst air quality in the nation.

During both trips the MPS students will be conferring with "Easy Breathers" contributors from the San Jose High Academy and the Jesse Jones High School in Houston.

The San Jose school was selected for the project because it has an international baccalaureate curriculum, as does Marshall. The Houston school became involved after a colleague of Holmes who teaches there expressed interest in the project.

"They agreed to participate, so it was a good contact," said Holmes. "They also have a video class and a science and environmental studies program."

While there is travel involved for the MPS students, taping for the most part will take place in Milwaukee.

"All the on-camera roles will be portrayed by the students and they also will be working with video production professionals on the project," said Holmes. "It will be a very high-quality video and it's a wonderful opportunity for the students."

Aside from the teens in Holmes' video production class, Marshall students from Heather Sattler's drama class will be working in front of the camera while students from

North Division and King will be working as reporters.

Holmes said the students will be working through June on the 14-minute video which will be distributed some time this fall to high schools throughout the country.

The students also will be contributing information to a Web site associated with the video.

The project is exciting, if not a

bit overwhelming.

"We haven't rolled tape yet, but crunch time is coming," Holmes said. "The students are going to find out what the real world is like, but in a school context."

If Eagle Wing Productions' track record is any indicator, the students are likely to do just fine.

The production class produced "Trading Up," a 2000 video for the

Milwaukee Construction and Building Trades Council for the Miller Park Board and "Get a Grip," for S.C. Johnson Wax in 1999.

A former student of Holmes is Marshall alumnus and director George Tillman, Jr., who wrote "Soul Food" and directed "Men of Honor," starring Cuba Gooding, Jr. and Robert De Niro.