

Tribal youth lead student group

By Leslie Mitts
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Nicolas Katchia and Alyssia Thompson took a trip this summer with more than just vacation in mind.

The two students volunteered their time to travel to Pittsburgh this summer for training as part of the Youth Development Team at Madras High School—a team that is quickly gaining both national and regional recognition.

Katchia and Thompson are the co-youth development team leaders for the upcoming school year, and attended the six-day training session as part of that responsibility.

Fellow team members voted the two into the positions at the end of the last academic year.

Now, after training, they are beginning to make plans for the team—including the continuation of an influential film project.

The group is an anti-drug and anti-violence team made up of students who volunteer their time during lunch one day per week.

Savenia Falquist, youth development consultant for Madras High School, said the Youth Development Team was selected to be a mentor site for the National YOVA project—and it's one of only seven mentor sites in the United States.

The Youth Development Team received a \$3,000 grant from the National Crime Prevention Council and the National Center for Victims of Crime last summer, she added.

"This funding is used to campaign against teen victimization," Falquist explained. "The kids are going to actually write our budget for the grant."

Katchia said the training they attended taught them the basics about sexual abuse and dating violence, among other subjects.

Katchia, a senior at Madras High School and also a member of the football team, said he originally became involved with the project when his cousin encouraged him to join her.

After that, he worked behind the scenes on the group's film project: a film about dating violence and sexual assault entitled "Silent Message."

Through the training, Katchia said, "I guess I learned that there are a lot of sites out there that are willing to help you."

Shortly after the beginning of the academic year, Katchia said, "We'll be planning stuff out."

Thompson was unavailable for comment.

Falquist said the duo has been very committed to their work with the Youth Development Team—something that is expected of all the team members.

When a student first becomes involved, she said, they have to sign an informal contract stat-

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Savenia Falquist

Youth development consultant

ing that they will maintain passing grades and continue to responsibly contribute to the group.

Students can become involved with the group by volunteering, Falquist said. "I also get referrals for kids that are really struggling in school to get them linked into something," she added.

The Youth Development Team was first established two years ago.

Last year's project, the "Silent Message" film, has grown into such a large project that the team plans to continue their work this year.

They will premier the film in Bend on October 4, and already showed a preview at a workshop this summer.

"We took the preview and we did a workshop in Corvallis at the violence prevention summer institute," Falquist said.

Six students presented the project to a group of professionals.

Five programs in Eugene have already invited the group to help develop female-specific programs, and Falquist said she thinks that will only continue.

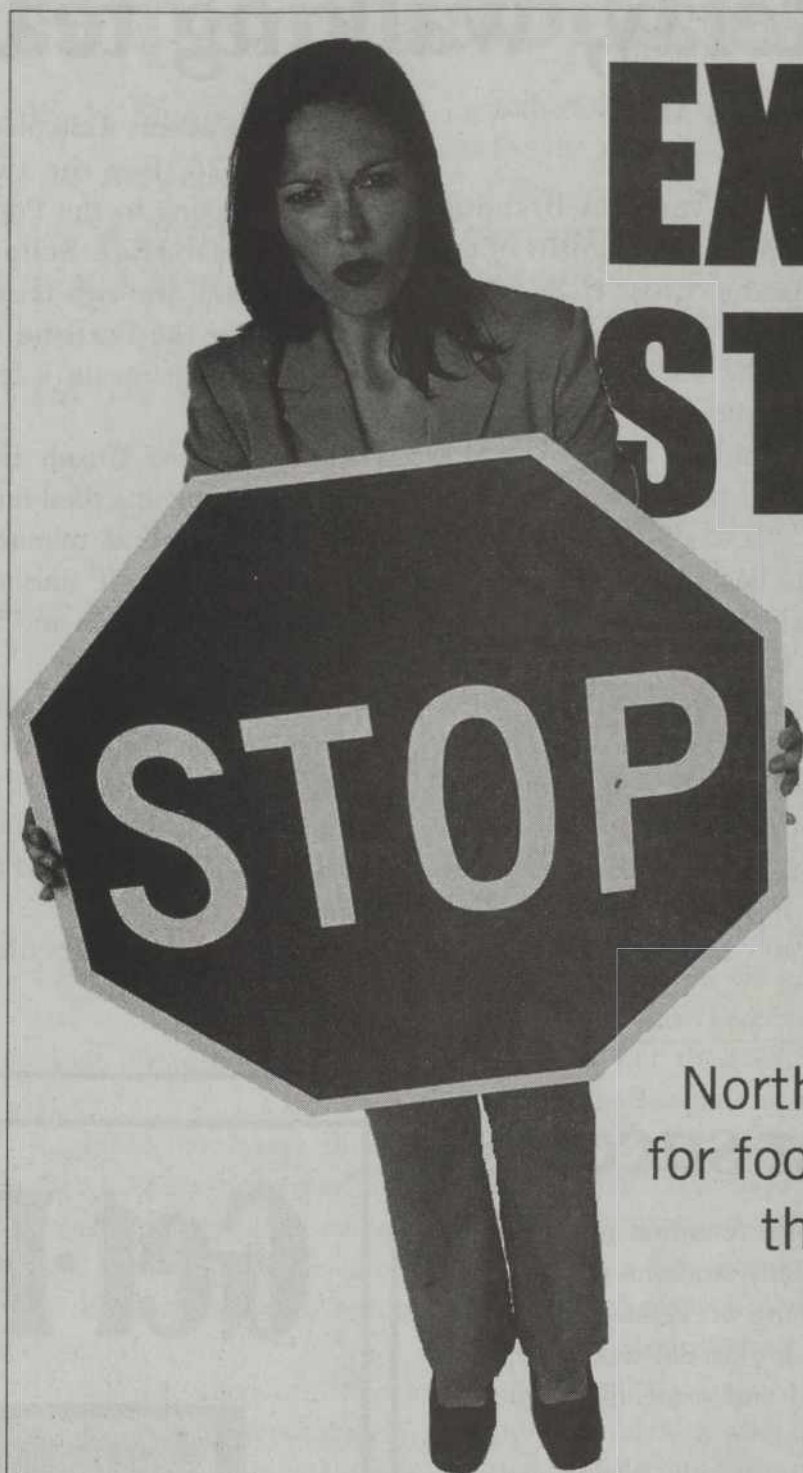
"This year because we did such a huge film project I have a feeling that we are going to be going around and working with other organizations and doing some trainings," she said.

While Falquist is impressed with the student's work, she feels that will only continue to grow. "They're going to get a lot of positive recognition for this," she said.

She also believes the students' work will help to break down stereotypes.

"I think that as a 34-year-old woman coming from a city, walking into Madras and starting to work with Warm Springs and Madras folks and their kids, I am just so impressed," she said. "Some of these kids come from the most difficult circumstances that we can imagine and for them to take their volunteer time and to stay dedicated and committed and go to places during their summer break and stay in touch with me and keep responding to things is just really amazing."

"I think they should be commended for it," Falquist continued. "I work with a lot of high-risk kids, and when you give them the pathway for opportunity, they want to make change."



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