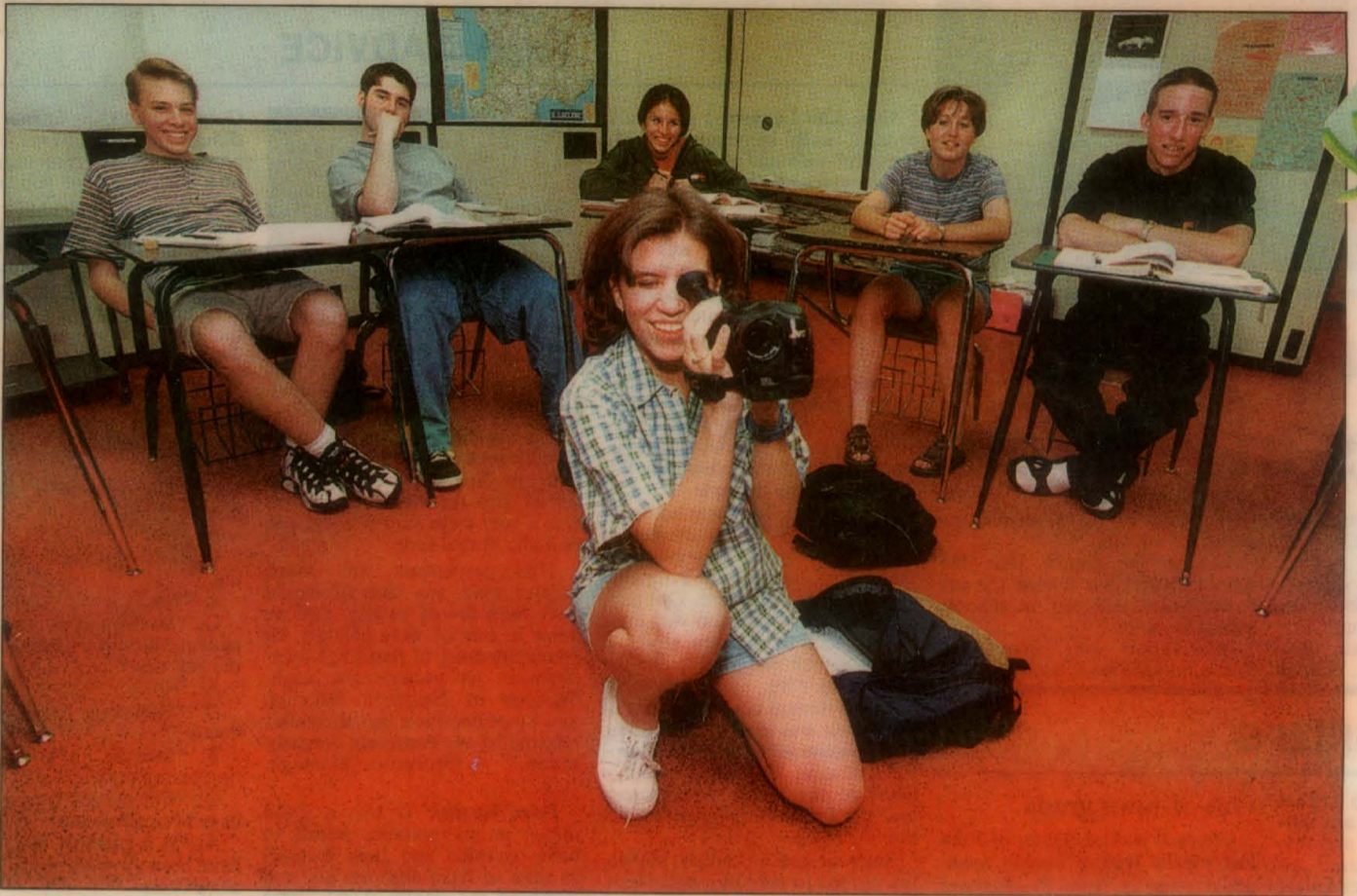


The Pueblo Chieftain

130 years...and still on the job

"There are a lot of misconceptions about what it's like to live in other countries and these videos are a good way to find out what's true and what's not.— Simon Tafoya, 17



Chieftain photo by John Jaques
Angelique Salgado uses a video camera to tape classmates in her advanced French class. The Pueblo County High School class and students from other schools are producing films to send to youth in other countries.

Parlez vous video?

By YVETTE S. PADILLA
The Pueblo Chieftain

Local students share lives with those in different countries

Using technology to "enlighten minds" is what several local students-turned-filmmakers are doing to share their everyday lives with their peers in different countries.

For the past several weeks, students from Pueblo County, Pueblo West and Rye high schools and Rye and Bradford elementary schools have been using camcorders to record their lives.

Once that's completed, they'll edit the clips into a single film and send it to other countries as a cultural exchange. Students from other countries will reciprocate.

The project is part of the World Video Exchange, an educational initiative of Pedal for the Planet's global learning exchange. The effort, which began in 1994, is the first human-powered 29,000-mile expedition around the world using bicycles, in-line skates, a kayak and a pedal boat.

Puebloans might recall Englishman Jason Lewis, a "Pedal" participant whose legs were broken when he was hit by a car while Rollerblad-

ing through Pueblo in 1995.

He stayed in Pueblo while recuperating from his injuries and visited several schools here and in Colorado Springs to promote Pedal for the Planet. His visits resulted in many friendships that have kept him coming back to promote international exchanges among young people.

According to Lewis, the World Video Exchange, funded by a Packard Foundation grant, is a "way to link Pueblo to the rest of the world."

Lewis recently met with the students from Pueblo County High to update the group's project. There was a lot of chatter as the advanced French students discussed who had the camera, what had been filmed and how much more they needed to do.

Teacher Carol Darcy said, "This is a good experience for them ... It's a neat cultural exchange because we've never done it with video before. We've done it with

(written) packets, but never video."

Rita Gonzales, 18, spoke of her filmings at Baskin-Robbins where she works, in biology class, at church and at two birthday parties.

"This is a good way to show that not all Americans are alike just like people from other countries are not all alike," she said. "I hope to do a good job in letting others see life in America from my perspective."

Senior Ryan Swope said he filmed one of his mountain biking excursions.

"I think it's going to be cool to find out what kind of activities other kids our age are doing," he said.

For Simon Tafoya, 17, using video is a "neat way to experience other people's culture."

"There are a lot of misconceptions about what it's like to live in other countries and these videos are a good way to find out what's true and what's not," he said.

A foreign exchange student herself, Claudia Kunert said she was "really impressed" with the project.

"I'm from Germany, so this is something I can take back with me and develop in my own country."

According to Lewis, the films will be translated into French, Spanish and Portuguese. The goal is to exchange 18 films from nine countries by the end of this year. The countries are: the United States, England, Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador.

In a similar project, Puebloan Rob Clemenza, 22, has produced a video of his life in Colorado and will be traveling overseas where he will bicycle through France, Spain and Portugal. He will stop at several schools along the way to share his video with students there and to act as ambassador for Pedal for the Planet.

Lewis explained: "The video exchange is a tool to connect the youth of the world together."

"The thing we want to get across is that although we live in different countries and we have different colors of skin and different cultures, we're basically all the same," he said.

For more information on the video exchange, check out the website at www.pedalplanet.org, or call 1-800-943-0114.