

## **EDUCATIONAL NETWORK LAUNCHES DIGITAL ANIMATION EXCHANGE AND TRAINING PROGRAM LINKING STUDENTS IN US, PAKISTAN AND UZBEKISTAN ON NATURAL DISASTER PLANNING**

Seeking successful models of youth engagement in natural disaster preparation and relief

**New York Sept. 22.** How can students help communities prepare for natural disasters like Katrina and recent floods in Pakistan? How can they play a role in school rehabilitation and consoling peers whose lives have been impacted? These are just two of the questions that students in the US, Pakistan and Uzbekistan will address in a new technology-based digital animation exchange and training program. The International Education and Resource Network (iEARN), in partnership with AnimAction and the Red Stick International Animation Festival today announced the launch of their **Community CATALYST Program**. This program will help youth in Pakistan, Uzbekistan and the U.S. make a meaningful contribution to their communities through the use of Internet-based interaction to create and share animated public service announcements on the topic of natural disaster preparedness.

Students around the U.S. will be asked to submit their successful models of youth engagement in natural disaster preparation and relief projects. iEARN will recruit, select, prepare and send two educators and four youth from both Pakistan and Uzbekistan to Baton Rouge, LA in January 2008 to review these models and participate in a two-week training with students who have been impacted by hurricane Katrina. In the summer of 2008, six US educators and youth will travel to Uzbekistan for two weeks for comprehensive animation training programs in all three countries. The program will include community service activities, classroom presentations, field trips, animation production and exhibitions.

In addition to gaining valuable 21<sup>st</sup> century technology skills, participants will acquire listening, communication, and negotiation skills. They will exchange information on the role that government agencies and private sector organizations can play in times of crises and explore cooperation and coordination across non-governmental sectors of a society—all in a context of the crucial role young citizens can play within a civil society.

The 16-month Internet and exchange project is made possible through a \$300,000 grant from the Office of Citizen Exchanges within the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State. The Community CATALYST project will result in: deeper personal and institutional ties between U.S., Pakistani and Uzbek educators and youth; dynamic, multilingual resources for natural disaster preparedness, the production of engaging public service announcements, and a replicable model for youth who may want to replicate the project in their own communities and countries.

### **About iEARN**

iEARN was launched in 1988 as a pilot project between the US and former USSR to demonstrate that students could use emerging new technologies to work together on meaningful educational projects that enhance the quality of life on the planet. It is iEARN's vision that if students start working together globally from the earliest ages (5-19), they will learn better through experiential interaction with peers in other countries and learn that the world's issues can be resolved by collaborative solutions. iEARN has grown to become the world's largest educational network for project-based learning, with programs in more than 120 countries. iEARN-USA was awarded the 2003 Goldman Sachs Foundation Prize for Excellence in International Education and is a 2004 Tech Museum Laureate winner for "technology benefiting humanity." Please visit [www.iearn.org](http://www.iearn.org) and [www.us.iearn.org](http://www.us.iearn.org) or e-mail: [iearn@us.iearn.org](mailto:iearn@us.iearn.org) iEARN-USA is based in New York City.

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**About AnimAction**

AnimAction has been working with youth media and the "DIY Youth Culture" globally for over 17 years. AnimAction gives young people the opportunity to experience the joys of collaboration and creativity through animation and has trained thousands of young people and teachers throughout the United States, Canada, the U.K., Europe, Africa and Asia.

**About RedStick International Animation Festival**

RedStick International Animation Festival is produced by the Laboratory for Creative Arts & Technologies, a research facility within the Center for Computation & Technology at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The central functions of the lab's efforts converge on a single purpose: to articulate discovery through the intersections of creativity, technology, and human expression.

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