

On Location

Brownsville student's story to be turned into short film

By *LESLIE DENNIS*
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December 20, 2006 — Caroline Boon's high school teacher gave her an assignment that changed her life.



"We had to write a script," the 17-year old Lopez High School senior said. "It was mandatory, but I got runner up, and I thought that was really amazing."

Now, three years and two scripts later, Boon's story will be turned into a short movie to be filmed right here in Brownsville.

Boon will be working with Hollywood director Eva Vives, who co-wrote and co-produced 2002's "Raising Victor Vargas," a coming of age film about Latino youth in New York City's Lower East Side.

Vives, who has been directing short films for 12 years, responded to Boon's story and hopes to bring her vision to the screen.

"I hope that it starts at the very least a conversation because that's the beginning of change," Vives said.

In the story, Boon's main character, a young girl named Alejandra, grapples with the consequences that result from having a sexual relationship. Although the character doesn't deal with pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, she feels a whirlwind of emotions that, Boon said, many young adults now face in our society.

"It's about self-esteem, and the point in your life where you're kind of stuck between being a kid and growing up, between adulthood and childhood and how hard it is to distinguish that line," Boon said.

Earlier this year, Boon became Texas' runner-up for the Scenarios USA "What's the REAL DEAL" story and scriptwriting contest. The contest, which seeks young writers in three different regions across the country, asks participants to reflect on and capture personal struggles that are often ignored. The organization chose Boon's story after the original contest winners were unable to continue with the process of turning their story into a finished film.

Scenarios USA is a national nonprofit organization designed to give young people access to media to shape society and the world around them. Co-founders Kristen Joiner and former ABC News producer Maura Minsky founded the organization in 1998 after they observed a similar program in Africa sponsored by Global Dialects Trust, Joiner said.

Since then, more than 7,500 youth nationwide have written stories about the issues facing America's youth.

Joiner wasn't surprised that this year's winner came from the Rio Grande Valley.

"Caroline is a fantastic writer," Joiner said. "She's very reflective. She thinks deeply, and she captures real stories and writing that are compelling to teenagers, to adults on many different levels. We've been working in the Rio Grande Valley since we started the organization in 1998. The talent that exists in the Rio Grande Valley doesn't get seen nationally enough."

In addition to working with Vives, Boon has spoken at American School Health Association in St. Louis, Mo., as well as traveled to New York to be part of Scenarios USA Youth Speakers Bureau. Boon also recently interned on the set of the film "Toothpaste" in Mission.

"It really was an eye-opening experience because I'd never seen anything like that before," she said.

Boon is looking forward to working on her own film with the help of Vives and a professional crew of filmmakers.

"That's really exciting, the fact that they're going to come down here, and they're going to bring a production crew and, like, a cinematographer and all these people," she said.

Boon's mother, Niobe Boon-Mendoza, recognizes the apparent maturity in the script and hopes people of all ages will get to see her daughter's work.

"The crisis is inside of her," she said about the script's main character. "We don't always have to change in response to disaster. We can change in response to whimpers of our own conscience. None of us are immune from ambivalence in our decision making."

Upon the film's completion in the spring of 2007, Boon will fly to New York City for the film's red carpet premiere. It will then be distributed nationwide. Scenarios USA plans to market the film to Showtime and other TV networks.