



Trash... technically

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Story Created: Oct 4, 2012 at 12:05 AM
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The video opens with a young woman typing away at a computer. After a malfunction she hits the device in frustration. She then picks up the desktop and tosses it out over the railing of two-storey building, where it crashes into a pile of discarded electrical and electronic devices.

This is the dramatic opening scene of the 11-minute video, *eWaste on the Loose*, produced primarily by the female pupils of Bishop's Centenary College and also one from South East Port of Spain Secondary.

It was created for a digital film production workshop organised by non-profit organisation The Community HUB Corporation as part of its electronic waste or "e-waste" awareness initiative, branded "e-Cycle".

Community HUB is a non-profit organisation that was set up in 2009 to empower young people by leveraging technology.

The video workshop was implemented to sensitise local youth to the global issue of e-waste and is intended to "engender a call to action by the citizenry, to avoid the proliferation of the e-waste problem in the Caribbean context".

The Express chatted with four of the 18 participants recently at Bishop's Centenary in Woodbrook, following a special prize-giving ceremony by main prize sponsor Fujitsu.

Bishop's Centenary principal Yvonne Pinder said she was "delighted to have the girls engaged in this project" and commended the Community HUB "for this laudable initiative".

Participant Karishma Farose, 14, a Form Two pupil, learned from her research that discarded electrical and electronic items could be harmful to your health, causing skin diseases or even cancer. She went home and realised they had a number of discarded electronic items.

"I was really shocked. I was like, thank God we could get rid of these electronics before it could get more dangerous to us," she said.

Through the programme she found some companies where the electronic waste could be donated, "and I told my mom and she said it was a great idea". Local e-waste companies include Caribbean Tech Disposals and Piranha International Ltd.

Farose expressed hope that through the research she did it will help people be aware of e-waste and learn how to dispose of electronics.

"So it's a good thing to learn and to know I would be helping somebody with their health," she added. The video workshop was also an eye-opening experience for Jada Gooding, a 16-year-old Form Four pupil.

"At home we have old speakers and old phones just sitting down in a box which could be harmful in the long run. You should get rid of them," she said.

Participant Kernisha Agarrat, 15, also in Form Four, encouraged other youths to be aware that improper disposal of electronics can harm them and others. She also advised youths that they did not have to buy "every new technology" that comes on the market, but should try to wait until their product reaches the end of their useful lives before upgrading.

Theanna Alleyne, 15 and in Form Five, noted that people could recycle old computers and other electronics by donating them.

"If you upgrade your technology, donate the old one to someone else," she said.

She noted that e-waste not only includes computers, printers and cellphones, but appliances like refrigerators and stoves being put at the side of the road, where they may be harmful to people and the environment.

For appliances like refrigerators and stoves, you should contact your local regional corporation for disposal.

"Do the right thing," she stressed.

Alleyne noted the workshop was a lot of hard work in a short time, but the teachers made it a lot of fun. Over the 20-day period spanning July 16 to August 10, the 18 young female participants were professionally trained in digital film production.

Their interviewees for the video included Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment Ramona Ramdial and Minister of Science and Technology Dr Rupert Griffith.

Griffith, in his interview, referencing Government's Laptop Initiative for Secondary Entrance Assessment pupils that introduced more than 17,000 laptops into the system each year, hinted at some measures that would be put in place to mitigate the potential environmental impact for these computers at the end of their useful lives.

Agarrat discovered she was capable of conducting interviews through the workshop. "I felt good knowing that I could ask ministers questions, give them things to think about," she said.

Gooding said the process opened up new career possibilities to her, specifically video production.

She was amazed seeing the final video and she felt proud of herself. Agarrat said the team of participants wanted to make a difference with the video and she hopes they did.

Workshop anchor sponsor Columbus Communications Trinidad/Flow, will be airing the video on its cable networks.

Some of the HUB upcoming initiatives include: Community TV, an animation programme targeted at young people to create film content and tell stories that have local content, context and characters; technology training for communities, involving website building for schools and exposing rural youth and older users to Web 2.0 applications; and eCycle, community-based e-waste programmes which are geared toward training youth to refurbish used electronic equipment and dismantle end-of-life equipment for export and recycling.