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Station puts learning in mix for teen

Southern High senior finds his groove with an internship at WRYR radio station

By Karen Nitkin Special to The Sun Originally published November 27, 2005 From the Cover

For Robert Steinberg, a senior-year internship at Southern High School has turned into his own radio program.

Steinberg's show, "Teen Radio," airs every Wednesday and Friday from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. on WRYR-LP, 97.5 FM. Steinberg plays rock, rap and alternative music, takes phone calls and has occasional guests. He also talks about the high school's sports teams.

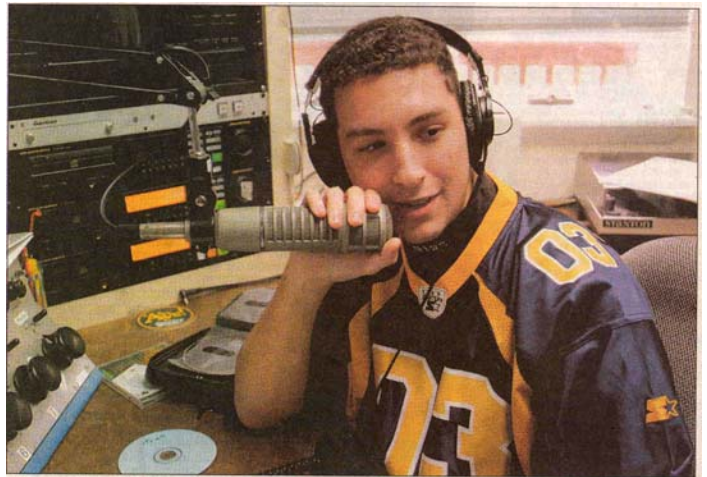
"I didn't know I was going to host my own show until they told me," Steinberg, 17, said.

Steinberg, like many seniors throughout the county, had signed on to do an internship as an elective. The program, which started eight years ago, enables students to learn through real-world experiences and requires them to write weekly reports about their experiences.

Marilyn Harmon, the career connections counselor who runs the internship program at Southern, helped Steinberg find an internship at WNAV, the CBS radio affiliate based in Annapolis. But that internship posed a scheduling conflict, so she and Steinberg looked in the phone book and found WRYR.

"I really don't have a roster of businesses because we don't have big businesses, our next-door neighbors are cows," Harmon said.

"We found out there was a volunteer radio station like five minutes from my house, and we thought that was cool," Steinberg said. WRYR, founded by the nonprofit South



Robert Steinberg, 17, has his own show, "Teen Radio", which airs Wednesdays and Fridays from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. on 97.5 FM radio in Churchton. The Southern High School senior plays rock, rap, and alternative music and takes phone calls.
Photo by Nanine Harzenbusch (Sun Photographer)

Arundel Citizens for Responsible Development (SACReD), was one of the first low-power stations in the nation, and remains the only one founded by an environmental group, said Chris Pokorski, the station manager.

The nonprofit station, which has been broadcasting since 2002, is run by volunteers. Though its 100-watt signal doesn't reach beyond the Chesapeake region, it streams on the Internet and reaches around the world, Pokorski said.

The station provides music, news and educational shows. Pokorski said he was happy to give Steinberg his own airtime. "One of the ways we always wanted to get involved with the younger people in the community was with internships," he said.

"We like to have a nice-sounding station, nice-sounding shows, but we realize this is kind of by the community and for the community," he said. "That's why we didn't have any real big issues with putting him on the air, we just thought it was great."

Pokorski said that Steinberg proved his mettle quickly. "He came in and did kind of a demo show, and he did pretty well and he was getting calls from some other students. He was playing music and talking about sports scores and other issues at the school. ... He seemed real confident and got the hang of the technical side of the job quickly."

Steinberg's mother, Linda, said the experience has been terrific for her son.

"He thought he'd just learn the basics of radio and such," she said. "However, they taught him more than the basics, and actually, the first day he started his own show and it's been progressing since then and it's gotten very interesting."

Steinberg is free to play whatever music he likes, Pokorski said. His only limitation is Federal Communications Commission standards, such as for profanity.

On the air last week, Steinberg played an eclectic mix of rock and rap. Between songs, he talked about a coming battle of the bands competition, the new Harry Potter movie, the rapper 50 Cent and even menorahs. He also gave "shout-outs" and happy birthdays to people he knew were listening.

Pokorski said the show was going so well that he hoped to continue a teen radio segment after Steinberg's internship ended.

Harmon, the internship coordinator, said internships provide valuable experience for students. "In high school, things seem to be so theoretical," she said. "But these internships demonstrate the application in real life. ... That way you can graduate from high school with your eyes wide open."

Some of the assignments are inevitably tedious, she said. If a student is working in a law office, there will be a fair amount of filing, but students might also get to sit in on trials. "I work with the mentors to give the interns a variety of experiences," she said. Still, she didn't expect Steinberg to get so much responsibility so quickly.

"It was almost like the second day he walked in the door, they put a microphone in his hand," Harmon said. "We didn't expect them to say, 'OK, you're at the starting line. Go.'" As for Steinberg, he says he's planning to major in either communications or political science when he goes to college next year, but he is not sure whether he's going to make radio his career. "It's definitely an option," he said. But there's a problem. "It's not the highest-paying job, unless you're huge."

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