

## Members of EMU's B. Side launch website

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Heritage Newspapers



Jack Bidlack (kneeling), program director for Eastern Michigan University's Business Side of Art program, poses with graduates following the ceremony June 6.

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Members of Eastern Michigan University's Business Side of Art, or B. Side of A., unveiled their new digital magazine, "Concepts of Life" at their graduation ceremony Aug. 6 at the Spark East building in downtown Ypsilanti.

The online magazine features articles, photos and videos chronicling issues facing individuals ages 16 through 24. The website was launched following a six-week program in which 17 students shadowed journalists, advertising agents and multimedia companies to better understand the world of community reporting.

"Our goal was to motivate the youth to create a service," said Jack Bidlack, B. Side program director. "We gave them the skills to develop a product through video production, web design and journalism."

"Our students learned how to harness their skills and develop a product while functioning in an employment atmosphere."

Bidlack said B.Side advisers defined the product, but it was up to the students to determine a target market and content to fill the website.

Roshard Slater, a B. Side intern, said he enjoyed the experience immensely.

"The first week we talked about what we wanted to write about. The second week we concentrated on web design, and the final week we were able to put it all together," he said. "I loved it; it was a great experience."

Slater said the B. Side interns chose topics such as teen pregnancy, single-parent households and sources of local entertainment for youth, among other issues.

"It's necessary to have a magazine like this for youth in Washtenaw County," he said. "A lot of youth don't have this information, or they don't know where to find it."

"This is our opportunity to speak out and tell our side of the story, and at the same time we can inform and educate."

Justin Lockard, who had a job-shadowing experience at Heritage Newspapers as part of the program, came up with the name of the website.

"I got to see the project from start to finish," he said. "The most important thing for me was seeing my work come to a final conclusion."

Lockard received special recognition for outstanding performance, along with students Richard Johnson III, Slater and Keisha Degraffinreid.

Bidlack said although the B. Side program is finished for the summer, it will continue to employ five youth to update the website with stories and video through a grant provided by Michigan Works!

"We did our research and we heard several folks tell us if the site isn't updated with fresh material all of the time, we're just wasting their time," he said. "If you run an online magazine, it has to be up-to-date all of the time."

Bidlack said the grant would provide enough funding to employ five youth for 10 hours a week.

"Their sole purpose will be dedicated to this endeavor," he said.

He said as the magazine grows, the B. Side would like to employ more youth as reporters.

"Our goal is to raise enough advertising dollars to be able to hire more writers," he said.

For more information about the website, visit [www.conceptsoflife.com](http://www.conceptsoflife.com).

The B. Side of A. is a program to provide skills-development in selected areas of the arts, integrated with entrepreneurship training. The program was launched in summer 2009 with funding from Washtenaw County.

For more information about the program, e-mail Jack Bidlack at [jbidlac1@emich.edu](mailto:jbidlac1@emich.edu).

B-side graduates:

Devin Bow, Deon Brown, Diana Seberry, Jasmina Dunson, MarQuanesha Faulkner, Justin Lockard, Ramon McClary III, Dorian McPhearson, Iesha Gray, Kamyra Cheatham, Dan Doorman, Keisha Degraffinreid, Xavier Clemons, Richard Johnson III, Porschue Mackey, Erin Johnson, Roshard Slater