

Teens Find Success with DVD

by Lee Williams

Background: This summer, two sophomores at Portland's St. Mary's Academy -- Dallas Jessup, 14, and Catherine Wehage, 15 -- produced a DVD called "Just Yell Fire." The DVD, which promotes self-defense for girls ages 11 to 19, can be downloaded for free on the Internet. Two stars of ABC's "Lost" -- Evangeline Lilly and Josh Holloway -- heard about the DVD through Wehage's cousin and lent their star power to the project.

Update: The DVD premiered at St. Mary's Academy, a private girls school, in late September. Two screenings at Cinetopia in Vancouver, where the girls live, drew long lines of viewers.

On Oct. 4, the "Just Yell Fire" Web site -- www.justyellfire.com -- began offering downloads of the completed DVD.

"We've had 6,000 downloads," Jessup says. "This is amazing." In addition, the site has notched about 80,000 hits. "This is exactly what we wanted, for the DVD to take off and get into everybody's hands," Jessup says.

Jessup and Wehage themselves have received national attention. The Oct. 16 issue of the weekly magazine *In Touch* features a piece on the girls, calling them "Super Teens" for their efforts.

Jessup hopes to put a copy of the DVD in every Oregon high school. But she has bigger plans, too. "My passion is to get this in every girl's hands and stop rape -- here, in Africa, China, everywhere."

Local and national support has been rewarding for the duo. "We had no idea what we were getting into," Wehage says. "I couldn't imagine it would get to this point."

What's next: Not content to bask in their success, Jessup and Wehage are working to find a distributor to get the DVD on the counters of superstores such as Wal-Mart. ■