

PRESS RELEASE

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Exploring the science of the teenager!

The Rural Media Company (www.ruralmedia.co.uk) and St Mary's High School (Specialist Science College) Hereford, are embarking on an innovative science and media project in the summer term of 2008, entitled **Teenology**.

Funded by **The Wellcome Trust**, **Teenology** will explore the science of adolescence through a multi-media installation that uses film, photography, music and graphics. The young people's production team at St Mary's will not only discover some of the reasons behind some of the physical, emotional and behavioural changes we experience as teenagers, but also learn how to explore these ideas through the media arts in a 3-month production process.

The project is also benefiting from the input of leading international scientists and broadcasters who specialise in this scientific field. The prestigious panel of experts will be coming to Hereford on 24th April to take part in a webcast debate which will be watched by young people from across the West Midlands. The panel will be chaired by **Vivienne Parry**, ex-presenter of *Tomorrow's World* and writer and broadcaster on *Panorama*, *Radio Four*, *Five Live*, *News of the World*, *The Times* and *The Guardian* and author of the book *The Truth about Hormones*. She will be joined by **Dr Sarah Jayne Blakemore**, who currently holds the Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Research Fellowship at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London, and was named by The Observer as one of the top 80 prodigiously talented young people who 'will shape our lives in the early 21st century' and **Dr Helena Gleeson**, who specialises in hormones and young people from Royal Manchester Children's Hospital.

"**Teenology** allows young people, and their parents, to ask the tricky questions about growing up that they have all wanted answered!" says Rural Media Producer Adrian Lambert, "Everyone knows about the deluge of hormones during puberty, which can affect body shape and cause hair to sprout in unfamiliar places, and yet hormones are also said to be widely responsible for other teenage behaviour including risk taking and even long lie-ins! We hope that the **Teenology Experience** will shed some light on the science that affects us all."

Critically, **Teenology** lets young people reframe 'adolescence' for themselves, and present it to the adult world, through the latest scientific research. Very often the direction of flow with scientific interpretation is the reverse; the adult world of media interprets the research and presents it's findings to the public, asserting ways of viewing teenagers.

Teenology is a unique opportunity for young people to learn more about the science of themselves!

RELEASE ENDS

Note to Editors

- Teenology is funded by The Wellcome Trusts People Award, as part of the Engaging Science programme. The fund supports projects that investigate bio-medical science and its social contexts.
- **The objectives of Teenology are:**
 - To deepen understanding of adolescent bio-science amongst school students, parents and educators
 - To stimulate informed debate about adolescent development and its societal implications amongst students, teachers and parents
 - To improve the applied, creative and media skills of students
 - To demonstrate the value of media literacy across the curriculum
 - Are hormones related to teenage behaviour? e.g. risk taking, conflict, depression, stress, identity, eating disorders, sleeping, violence, addiction

We asked a class of 14 year olds from St Mary's, on an anonymous survey, what words sprung to mind when they thought of 'teenagers'. Answers included; growing up, imaginative, drink, cigarettes, groups of friends, going out, sex, make-up, drugs, braces, periods, pressure, fun, parties, spots. But they also included words like rage, drunks, vandalism, rebellious, no ambitions in life, 'all things which are bad basically'.

When asked 'what characteristics do adults attribute to you being a teenager', they wrote things like; being moody, lazy, immature, antisocial, argumentative, annoying, unhelpful, disrespectful, rebellious, untidy. Also mentioned were; not trying at school, short sentences and knowing it all.

- Based in Herefordshire and established in 1992 **The Rural Media Company** uses media and communications - film, video, photography, journalism, graphic design and the Internet - to produce high-impact moving image and new media work. Rural Media is a key client the UK Film Council, supported through the regional screen agency Screen WM and has won numerous awards nationally and internationally and is one of the UK's leading producers of media with young people.
- The **Wellcome Trust** is the largest charity in the UK. It funds innovative biomedical research, in the UK and internationally, spending around £650 million each year to support the brightest scientists with the best ideas. The **Wellcome Trust** supports public debate about biomedical research and its impact on health and wellbeing. <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk>