

# Westlake middle school



*Left: At the Jacob Burns Center, Marylou Tibaldi-Bongiorno engages Patrick McCabe in conversation while Meaghan Glendon and Michelle DiDonato watch her technique. Below: Jerome Bongiorno, center, helps Alexis Beland and Devin Carter position the camera on Nick Marcella.*



## Learning the art of the documentary

Move over ceramics, there's a new art form in school ... the documentary film.

This spring, art teacher **Susan Cowles-Dimetri** introduced documentary filmmaking to the eighth grade art curriculum, where it was met with great enthusiasm.

With a \$2,000 grant that she was awarded from the Teachers' Center at Purchase College, Ms. Cowles-Dimetri contacted award-winning film documentarians **Jerome** and **Marylou Tibaldi-Bongiorno** and the **Jacob Burns Film Center** in Pleasantville to prepare a hands-on program for students.

As an introduction, students first screened the documentary "Revolution '67" by Ms. Tibaldi-Bongiorno. The film, which aired

last summer on the PBS series 'Point of View,' focused on the riots in Newark, New Jersey during 1967.

After in-depth discussion of the film, students broke into groups to learn interviewing, storyboarding and filming techniques from the Bongiornos and Jacob Burns faculty. They then took that knowledge back to class where they spent the next few weeks writing and producing their own documentaries.

A follow-up classroom visit from Jerome and Marylou yielded one-on-one instruction and positive critique. They were able to discuss problems that students encountered as well as give them tips on how to overcome

filming obstacles.

Working with students this young was a first for the couple, who are used to lecturing to college film students.

"It was very exciting," related Marylou, who enjoyed being able to see the students in action. Jerome found their excitement refreshing. "They are like, 'yeah, let's go!'" he said.

And go they did.

**Cassidy Percopo** and **Rebecca Castro's** eighth grade team filmed their documentary about global warming. They interviewed students and teachers and edited the footage on the school's iMac computers.

"[Marylou and Jerome] taught us how to hold the camera and what angle to shoot it from," said Rebecca. "We were actually editing it on the computer!"

"It was so much fun," agreed Cassidy.

Who knows, from this class a future documentarian just may have been born.