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Humans of HPA Project

ABSTRACT:

A visual storytelling of HPA culture, shown through photographs and captions, including research on what makes something go viral, and how we can use this knowledge to effectively spread the story of HPA.

INTRODUCTION + GOALS:

The main inspiration for this project was a love of photography and writing, and figuring out a way to meld it all together to recreate experiences we have at HPA so current and prospective families can get a sense of what the school is like. The end goal for this project is to be able to create a space for these stories to be showcased weekly and feature students and faculty members, and answering the essential question. This essential question is “why do things go viral?”, as in why do people enjoy memes and cat videos so much? How can I use this research to better spread the story of HPA?

IMPLEMENTATION + CHALLENGES:

Project Planning: My plan for this project is to take pictures throughout the week; at the end of the week I should have enough photos and stories to refine the pile until I finally have a polished piece that can be published on social media. Humans of New York is portrait based, with captions that can range from simple quotes to long stories about the subject. I will be shooting portraits as well for my project. For the ‘viral’ part of the project, I will dedicate some time each class to do research on the topic and look for common themes.

Research and Resources: So far, my research on ‘viral’ things has uncovered that they tend to be simple, easy to understand, colorful and vibrant, and quick. A post might go viral on Tumblr, but not on Facebook. I will conduct more research about what the public is interested in (ie what content appears to be most prevalent.)

Challenges: What would be most challenging about this project is getting diversity in photographs and unique stories - I will overcome this by asking unusual questions and start up a natural conversation, instead of making it feel uncomfortable. Another challenge will likely be trying to predict what people will like and how it spreads.

IMPACT + LEGACY:

Impact: Through research, I hope to learn how to effectively portray the stories of HPA, and communicate ideas using both visual and verbal media. Some skills I’d gain from this project include time management, creating contingency plans, becoming better at communication, and improving my photographic technique.

Legacy: This project could be used both on the HPA website and social media, as an example of student content and what the students here are like, demonstrating the core values of the school too: Integrity, Wonder, Respect, and Pursuit of Excellence. A follow-up project for this could be using research on ‘viral things’ to better propagate other information, perhaps for other topics. Someone else could also pick up the Humans of HPA project, and find ways to expand the project into the community as well.

APPENDIX A: KEY RESOURCES:

- <https://blog.drumup.io/blog/the-virality-secrets-behind-five-most-popular-social-media-memes-of-all-time/> : Discusses what makes memes viral.
- <https://www.facebook.com/humansofnewyork/> : Prime example of evocative photography and captioning, used as inspiration.
- <http://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com> : Again, short but effective captions.
- https://www.google.com/search?q=memes&safe=active&client=safari&rls=en&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj-ofnaj9jOAhVBzmMKHa9-BS4Q_AUICCGB&biw=1338&bih=749#safe=active&tbn=isch&q=most+popular+memes : Compilation of top viral memes, research which ones people saw and where (ie Facebook, Stumbleupon).
- <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kiriblakeley/2011/09/06/why-does-something-go-viral/#6565156c6420> : More research on why something goes viral, like a blog post.

APPENDIX B: TOOLS + MATERIALS:

Critical:

- Camera: Fujifilm X10
- SD Card
- Computer: For photo editing purposes
- Computer: For research purposes

Necessary:

- Phone/Notepad: To jot down notes on what the subject says

Optional:

- Props: Used to enhance a photo, connects to the story