

WFP stops clock on Hungerbytes competition

From Alabama to Addis Ababa, the World Food Programme sent university students to Ethiopia to film the reality of hunger first-hand. Three university students have edged out fierce competition, including a professional filmmaker, to win the first-ever YouTube video contest on hunger, which has attracted more than half a million views from people all over the world.



Emma Thompson, Meri Kate Purgason and Collin Butler will head to Ethiopia in November where they will witness the ravages of hunger first-hand and film the United Nations World Food Programme's (WFP) work in action.

"We feel deeply moved and honoured," said Meri Kate Purgason, a 20-year-old marketing student currently at Auburn University in Alabama. "I believe the war on hunger is one that can be fought and won - and that gives me a lot of hope," she added.

To the unsettling sound of a sharply ticking clock, the winning video, aptly entitled "Time Is Running Out", features a sequence of photos of children in groups - some slowly being grayed out of the picture. The underlying message hinges on the reality that a child dies of hunger every six seconds in the world today.

The winning video can be viewed on YouTube - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_fpRmpafwo. It was through the YouTube site last November that WFP called upon creative types, including students and would-be filmmakers, to fire up their imaginations and produce viral videos that generate buzz and get people to talk about hunger.

"We wanted to reach a new group of activists and humanitarians. The YouTube generation is confident, forward-thinking and web-savvy. Their involvement in hunger initiatives can have a powerful and widespread impact on the fight against hunger," said Nancy Roman, WFP's director of communications.

During the course of the contest, HungerBytes attracted interest from various mainstream media outlets, including the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*, in addition to being talked about on blogs and social networks, such as Myspace and Facebook.

More than 70 video entries streamed in from all corners of the world from both professional and amateur producers for the

HungerBytes competition and were judged by a panel of leaders in film, web and humanitarian aid, including Edward Zwick, director of "Blood Diamond" and "The Last Samurai," Oscar-winning producer Cathy Schulman ("Crash," "Darfur Now," "The Illusionist") and Steve Grove, head of YouTube News and Politics. The judges narrowed the list down to five finalist videos, which were on view for two months of voting on the YouTube website - the winning video was the one that garnered the most views.

During the trip to Ethiopia, the winning team will visit WFP's largest food assistance operation currently targeting an estimated 9.6 million hungry people reeling from a lethal combination of drought and high food prices.

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