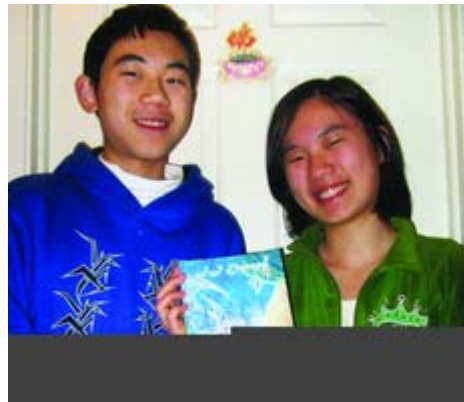


## First-year educates children through graphic novels

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**Issue date:** 2/11/09 **Section:** [News](#)

While most students here on the Hill are busy with schoolwork, extracurricular activities and campus jobs, Jenny Chen '12 has gone one step further by creating and publishing her own graphic novel which are geared towards educating children about environmental and cultural awareness. The comic book, called JJ Express Magazine, started as a school project and recently received a \$10,000 grant for continued publication.



Media Credit: Picture from Facebook.com

Chen came up with the concept for her magazine during her senior year at Wootton High School in Maryland. She had to create a senior project, so she teamed up with her younger brother Jack to do so. Chen received financial assistance from the beginning, securing a \$1,000 grant from Youth Venture, an organization that provides funding to help teams of young people from the ages of twelve to twenty start new youth-led organizations. Chen originally contacted colleges to find students who would be interested in providing artwork, and now the graphic novel features both professionals and amateurs artists from around the world. "We thought it would be great to enable students to create artwork for the comic book and be able to have their work published alongside that of a professional," Chen said.

Chen said the idea of using a comic book to educate children about today's issues seemed like the best way to reach younger generations. "The graphic novel industry hit \$330 million in sales in the year 2006 alone. Kids are reading graphic novels, so it seemed like a great way to connect to them and educate them about the issues that are relevant today and will impact their futures."

And JJ Express certainly has had an impact. After distributing the magazine through schools and libraries, roughly 250 copies have already been sold. Chen then entered her magazine into a contest to win a \$10,000 grant. The grant, which was co-sponsored by Best Buy and Youth Venture, was awarded to fifteen different teams who had creative ideas to change the world. The winners, including JJ Express Magazine, were chosen through a combination of votes and a selection committee.

Chen endlessly promoted her magazine to gather as many votes as possible. "I sent messages out on Facebook, I put up posters around the campus, and I even walked through the dining halls on the last day the votes were open to get as many votes as I could. Almost everyone I asked to vote would take out his or her phones and vote right there, it was great. In the end, we earned 6,000 votes."

With the current success of JJ Express Magazine, Chen is now working on publishing the next issue. Aside from the work she and her brother put into the magazine, a club at her high school also helps produce the graphic novel. Chen is currently working on expanding the team to provide more leadership roles for young people. Her future goals for the magazine include adding animated comics and online distribution, which would be cheaper and would make it easier to reach more people.

Students interested in using their ideas or their artwork to make a difference are encouraged to contact Chen. Everyone is invited to submit ideas for a comic, and any students interested in providing artwork simply need to provide three samples of previous work. Jenny Chen can be reached at Box 7784 or at [editor@jjexpressmagazine.org](mailto:editor@jjexpressmagazine.org). The next issue is slated to run in April 2009.

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