



SUDDENLY IT'S TODAY!

by Mike Peringer, Class of '53

It was an unusually damp and cool morning in June when the phone rang. You do remember phones, right?

A pleasant voice - "This is Meredith Reis. I'm calling from 30 Rock in New York" Yes she actually said that! "I'm a producer on the TODAY show here at NBC and I want to talk to you about Urban Artworks. Your non profit was nominated for a Pepsi Challenge prize of \$100,000 and I'm pleased to announce that Artworks was one of four chosen out of 700 nominations." *Silence ... More silence*

"Wow!", I cleverly opened with. "That's really neat." "Yes," she continued, " your group was nominated by your Program Coordinator and the judges immediately put Artworks on the top of the list. Now we need to arrange for a film crew to visit Artworks and produce your segment on the show, the one that will determine the winner by national vote."

Well, that is how it started.

A few days later, a four person film crew showed up and spent the day taping over 8 hours of Artworks material from the studio, of our kids, some murals and other projects we have done over the years in the Greater Seattle area.

For those of you who don't know Artworks, it is an organization I started some 15 years ago to clean up the industrial area of town we call SODO (SOUTH of DOWNTOWN). To do that we began using at risk adjudicated youth from the Juvenile Detention Center, mid level felons 13-17 years old. Over the years we have used over 6000 kids creating over 2500 public art projects mainly murals and construction site panels.

It seems that Kathleen, our talented Program Coordinator, while getting ready to come to work, was watching the TODAY show and saw the story about the Pepsi Challenge and simply submitted our story. She didn't even mention it to me but she too got the call from our new friend, Meredith, the producer.

So at 3 AM on July 1, we and our friends with the film crew were all at the studio when the announcement was made live from NYC (the show is delayed on the West Coast). Well, we didn't win the top prize. It went to a gulf coast nonprofit. How can you compete with that? But, we were all delighted to be told by the Pepsi lady being interviewed by Meredith Vierra, that the runners up were going to get \$50,000!!!! And, believe me we were all yelling and screaming when they made that announcement. It couldn't have come at a better time since most nonprofits are struggling big time right now.

That's it. Should you want to see the 58 second piece that appeared on the show, you can go to <http://urbanartworks.org/> or let me know at mike@processheating.com.

A follow up, "Where Are They Now?" aired on TODAY Tuesday September 7, so we get another shot at fame. Here is the link: <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/37309350>. The power of the web and live television lives on inasmuch as we have received literally hundreds of emails from all over the world some including funds.

It was a good, fun experience, particularly the positive outcome.