

**press release**

***PLANET H<sub>2</sub>O*** ON PUBLIC TELEVISION CIRCLES THE GLOBE TO BRING YOUNG VIEWERS THE STORY OF THE WORLD'S MOST VITAL RESOURCE

Two-Part Program Premieres In April To Mark Earth Day

Young Stars America Ferrera And Sara Paxton Team Up With Thirteen/WNET New York To Get The Word Out About The State Of The World's Water Supply

Water-borne disease is the leading cause of death for children worldwide. Motivated by that powerful fact, teenagers from Dix Hills, New York held a fashion show to help pay for a simple water filtration system in a tiny village nearly 5,000 miles away in the Amazon rain forest. "It's a human right to have clean water," says Lisa, one of the teenagers. As many scientists identify access to water and the quality of the world's fresh water supply among the most critical environmental challenges of the century, this magazine-style program helps teens and pre-teens understand the interconnection between water and every life form on Earth. "Everyone can make a difference," says Erika Gunter, a whitewater rafting guide on the Rio Grande near Taos, New Mexico. "Because it's all interlinked. All our rivers, all our water, everything is ***PLANET H<sub>2</sub>O***."

Thirteen/WNET New York's ***PLANET H<sub>2</sub>O***, a two-part special focusing on fresh water systems around the world and their impact on land, air and living things, premieres on public television in April to mark Earth Day (check local listings), and is distributed nationally by American Public Television. The first episode, ***The Secret Life of Water***, is hosted by actress Sara Paxton (*Darcy's Wild Life*). The second episode, ***Water World***, is hosted by actress America Ferrera (*The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, Real Women Have Curves*).

“When today's kids grow up and begin making decisions, they'll need to understand how their choices affect earth's capacity to support life, and how to make decisions that will ensure a sustainable future for everyone,” says executive producer Maura Kelly. “Our goal with **PLANET H<sub>2</sub>O** is to promote a balanced stewardship of the earth's fresh water while helping make science as exciting as it is meaningful to the daily lives of kids and teenagers.”

Education and action are a primary focus of the fast-paced **PLANET H<sub>2</sub>O**, which helps motivate kids to get involved in their own communities, as well as the worldwide community, by featuring stories of teens who help make a difference.

Program One, **The Secret Life of Water**, illustrates the importance of water management and conservation by tackling the twin issues of availability and pollution. In the segment, “A Day in the Life of the Rio Grande,” the river is seen through the eyes of two young women: a whitewater rafting guide from upstream, where the river really is “grande,” and one living in the desert near El Paso, Texas, where the river earned the nickname “Rio Wimpy.” The segment also introduces Gloria and Mary Melendez, a mother-daughter pair who are educating people in Las Colonias, on the border of Texas and Mexico, about water and their health.

In the following segment, “Precision Farming,” viewers learn that farming accounts for 70 percent of the fresh water usage in the world and that more than half of the water used in agriculture is wasted. The story centers on 14-year-old Jake and his dad, Mark, a fifth-generation grain farmer in Nebraska, who are using new technologies to save water for future generations of farmers.

“Bottle or Tap?” explores the booming business of bottled water. A crack team of teen supersleuths investigates and gets to the bottom of the big questions: Is bottled water really tastier, fresher and healthier?

Understanding the central role watersheds play in the availability of clean, fresh water is key to Program Two, **Water World**. At the same time fragile and resilient, watersheds worldwide

are threatened by pollution, dams and diversions, which can result in unintended negative consequences for all living things. The first segment, “Pumped Up for Peace,” features an indigenous Amazon community that is building a clean water system and visits the high school students in New York who raise funds for its construction.

When six-year-old Ryan Hreljac of Canada learned that kids in Africa die from drinking polluted water, he couldn't rest until he did something to help. Ryan started out raising money by doing extra chores, but today the teenager's foundation is building wells in countries around the world, helping hundreds of thousands of people live healthier lives. “Ryan's Well Foundation” tells his inspiring story.

A group of teens learn from Maryland watermen how challenging it is to make a living by catching crabs in today's Chesapeake Bay, which is featured in “Saving Chesapeake Bay.” After discovering that pollution in the watershed is jeopardizing the bay's ecology and economy, the teens learn how they can take a leadership role in restoring the bay to health.

When it comes to sharing water, what is fair? “Water for Money” takes aim at this question by examining the Great Lakes of North America, which contain 20 percent of the world's fresh surface water, but supply only a very small number of the world's inhabitants. In this segment, experts and teens inside and outside the Great Lakes watershed offer different perspectives on the sharing of water.

At the close of each episode, the host invites viewers to get involved by checking out the program's dynamic Web companion *H<sub>2</sub>O ONLINE*, [www.thirteen.org/H2O](http://www.thirteen.org/H2O), featuring a cool interactive section where kids can dive into the world of water, exploring maps, water pollution hot-spots around the world, and a “day in the life” of a water scientist. The educators section of the Web site includes original lesson plans, activities and resources for use in the classroom and after-school programs. *H<sub>2</sub>O ONLINE* also features more than 100 online and print water resources for children and adults - showcasing environmental organizations, books, experiments and

activities, and games.

Thirteen is conducting a national outreach campaign to teach educators to use the **PLANET H<sub>2</sub>O** programs, Teacher's Guide and Web site effectively in classrooms and after school programs. In addition to providing face-to-face training to teachers across America, Thirteen is working in partnership with public television stations and organizations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the Urban Park Rangers, the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation and The Association of Science-Technology Centers to extend **PLANET H<sub>2</sub>O**'s free distribution to teachers and after-school educators.

Maura Kelly is executive producer of **PLANET H<sub>2</sub>O**. Naomi Edelson is senior producer. Ian Saunders is lead science consultant.

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### **Thirteen/WNET New York**

Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, and *Cyberchase* - as well as the work of Bill Moyers - to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as The Ethnic Heritage Specials, The Thirteen Walking Tours, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. With educational and community outreach projects that extend the impact of its television productions, Thirteen takes television "out of the box." And as broadcast and digital media converge, Thirteen is blazing trails in the creation of Web sites, enhanced television, CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs, educational software, and other cutting-edge media products. More information about Thirteen can be found at: [www.thirteen.org](http://www.thirteen.org).

### **American Public Television**

For 44 years, American Public Television (APT) has been a prime source of programming for the nation's public television stations. APT distributes more than 10,000 hours of programming including *JFK: Breaking the News*, *Simply Ming*, *Globe Trekker*, *Rick Steves' Europe*, *Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home*, *Battlefield Britain*, *Jungle*, *America's Test Kitchen*, *Lidia's Italian-American Kitchen* and classic movies. APT is known for identifying innovative programs and developing creative distribution techniques for producers. In four decades, it has established a

tradition of providing public television stations nationwide with program choices that enable them to strengthen and customize their schedules. More information about APT is available at [www.aptonline.org](http://www.aptonline.org).

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