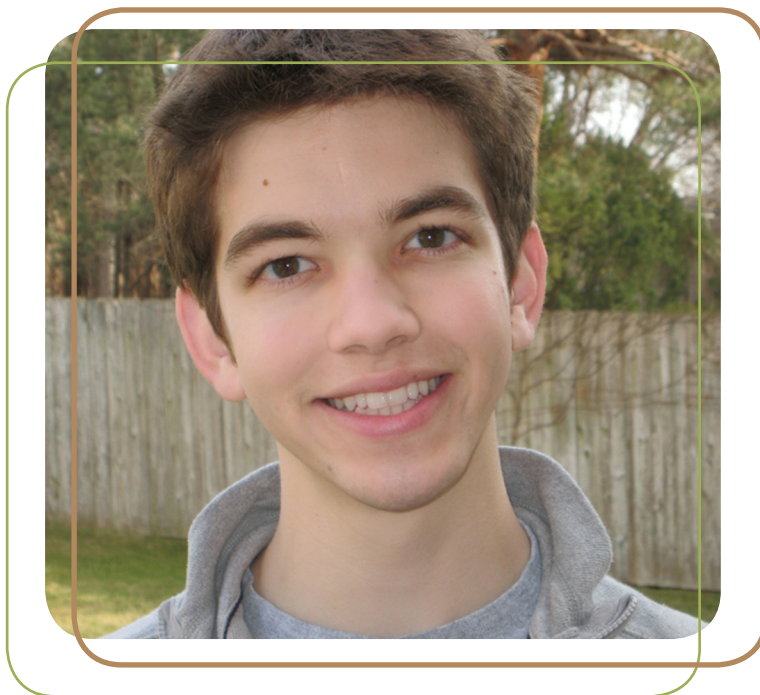




sierra's STARS

Local student behind
www.veritaserum.com, the
most popular Harry Potter
website in the world.



MEET MATTHEW VINES. He's a junior at East High School and is active with the theatre department. He's part of the school newspaper staff, a member of the National Honor Society and in the International Baccalaureate program.

Sebelius signed Bill 2457 prohibiting the investment of funds by the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System in certain companies with business operations in Sudan.

He's also the brains behind veritaserum.com, the most popular Harry Potter website in the world. He's walked the red carpet and met celebrities Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint, who play the three main characters of the Harry Potter movies. He's been mentioned in the *Wall Street Journal*, and in May of this year, he convinced Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius to sign targeted Sudan divestment legislation into law.

When Vines started veritaserum.com (named for the truth potion in the Harry Potter series), he was only 13 years old. He had no idea he would soon be a key contact for Warner Brothers, invited to movie premieres and rubbing elbows with some of Hollywood's hottest stars.

"When I started it, I didn't even think about it becoming popular. It was just something that I wanted to do for myself at first," says Vines.

With the release of the seventh and final book in the series, and the fifth movie scheduled for July, Harry Potter is once again a hot topic. Vines says, on average, his site receives around 75,000 hits a day and hundreds of e-mails, but at a time like this, those numbers rise.

Not only is Vines the creator and webmaster of veritaserum.com, he also manages an international staff currently representing five continents. The site generates revenue from advertisers like Google, who advertise their Harry Potter merchandise on Vines' website. Vines says the money from advertisers is necessary to offset the high cost of maintaining the website.

Proof of his maturity and a testament to his diverse interests, Vines is also the founder and leader of the Darfur Action Group at East High School, a group dedicated to ending the widespread violence in the Darfur region of Sudan.

"The atrocities being committed in the Darfur region of Sudan are appalling, and as citizens of the most influential country in the world, we should do everything in our power to help stop them," he says. "Genocide should not be allowed to occur in this day and age, and it is our civic duty and moral obligation to ensure that it doesn't."

His group recently traveled to Topeka to convince Kansas lawmakers to divest from Sudan. Their efforts paid off on May 11 when Governor

"It is thrilling to know that we, as high school students, can actually play an integral role in passing a law if we put our hearts and our minds to the task," Vines says. "If anything, this will only inspire us all to step up our activism, as we now know that we can accomplish things here in Kansas that help those in dire need halfway around the world."

So where does Vines find the time to maintain the ever-changing veritaserum.com website, convince Kansas lawmakers to sign important laws that will change the lives of others, keep up with his schoolwork, and participate in extra-curricular activities like theatre, newspaper staff and National Honor Society?

"I don't get as much sleep as I should," Vines admits. "I am always swamped with schoolwork and other extra-curricular activities during the daytime, so I do end up spending a considerable amount of time updating my website after midnight." ●

SIERRA SCOTT is a spokesperson, freelance reporter and host of "It's ALL Good with Sierra Scott." To contact Sierra or for more information on her endeavors, visit www.itsallgoodprods.com.

