

"The Science of Philadelphia" premiered on Comcast this month

By Gloria Blakely

Host Grand Hank (scientist Tyraine Ragsdale) and co-host Ambra Hook extended their live science television program to Comcast Network cable subscribers on October 11. For several years, the two have produced "The Science of Philadelphia" for upper-elementary and middle school students using a closed TV broadcasting system to Philly schools. Now Grand Hank demonstrates that "anybody can be a scientist" to approximately 450,000 households weekly.

The fascinating half-hour show originates live at 10:30 a.m. each Thursday with cable rebroadcasts at 5:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. The program is a model of how to make science interesting by "keeping it real and innovative." With the addition of a curriculum designed by Ambra Hooks to meet the national science standard of education, young viewers find both entertainment and substance.

The concept for the show evolved from Tyraine Ragsdale's early efforts to give back to his native community. Having grown up in the Mill Creek housing project in West Philadelphia, a challenging childhood environment fueled his interest in education. He explained, "I saw first-hand how I didn't want to live and saw people around the neighborhood who were living better than we." He set a goal for an improved lifestyle, and his parents showed him education was the key to that desired objective. Ragsdale does not consider himself either a "nerd" or a person of "high intelligence." This average guy simply adopted the strategy to become highly educated. Then he worked hard to build the mind of a chemist while matriculating at the University of Pittsburgh.

When Ragsdale was asked to speak to a group at the Franklin Institute, he jumped at the oppor-



GRAND HANK AND AMBRA HOOK host live science show new to the Comcast Network.

tunity to share his joy of science with area youngsters. Not wanting to bore the kids into a stupor, he drew upon his

former experience as a DJ and integrated rap music to hold their attention. The enthusiasm seen in those children's eyes set Ragsdale on the path of motivational speaking and later science demonstrations to young minds. Through words, science and rap music, Grand Hank is living proof for today's children that you can be "successful and legit" at the same time.

As demand mounted for his road shows targeting school systems, at-risk youths, juvenile justice commissions and private schools, Ragsdale left a cushy research science job at Johnson & Johnson in 1994 to devote himself to working as Grand Hank.

While audiences will not hear rap on "The Science of Philadelphia" TV program, the region can look forward to Ragsdale turning up the volume in a new, 12-week "Science Lab of Grand Hank" cable series, to air on Wednesdays beginning February 6, 2002 at 2:00 p.m. Check your local listings for rebroadcast times.

According to Grand Hank, "This high energy program combines hip-hop music with hands-on lab demonstrations to get students fired up about science." The show will mirror his live tours for high school students, which feature his original rap songs about

Black scientists, African inventions, becoming a scientist, and the three key motivators to education — parents, teachers and environment. A stream of guest MC's and DJ's will add to the fun with other positive songs. Grand Hank boasts this laboratory show will be "off the hook" as well as meet national science standards for high school students.

get kids excited about science. Under the banner of Grand Hank Productions Incorporated, founded in 1990, this thirty-something bachelor has become a multimedia enterprise with the mission of

encouraging more students, particularly minorities, into a scientific career. Additionally approaching this mission from many angles, student interns are hired through Southwest Community Service Center to work at his company for an opportunity-filled six weeks each summer.

For more information about his full array of science products and programs including "Science Lab of Grand Hank" videos and an upcoming

book of experiments, visit www.grandhank.com, email GrandHank@aol.com or call 215.724.5260.



With or without rap music, Ragsdale also offers educators both easy-to-use durable kits and professional development workshops packed with the tools needed to