

The students behind the YouTube channel bioZone, including Roshni Bhatt (pictured), think science should be fun.



THEY ARE IN THE ZONE THOUSANDS TUNE IN TO STEM CHANNEL RUN BY GRAD STUDENTS

“What color are your bones?” Roshni Bhatt asks in the opening of a video posted in January. “What if I told you there’s a chance they could be green?” Bhatt goes on to explain how an acne treatment (tetracycline) joins with calcium in the bone matrix to produce a fluorescent hue.

On the YouTube channel bioZone, six Pitt Med students tackle quirky (yet often complex) scientific questions with a sense of fun. Is CBD a cure-all? Can you get all your DNA from one parent? Why do cats’ eyes gleam in the dark? bioZone has the answers—usually accompanied by sound effects, pithy quips and helpful visuals.

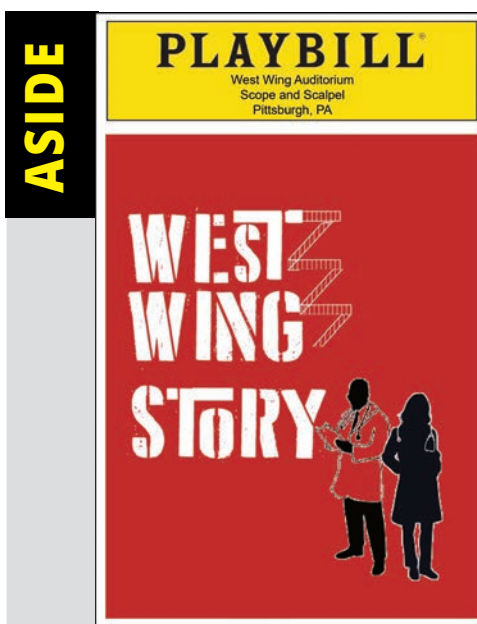
The channel launched early in the COVID-19 pandemic, when PhD student April Rich decided to create a series to engage young people with science. BioZone has since grown into a six-person operation featuring Bhatt, Dante Poe, Marissa Di, Mark Ebeid and Steven Smeal—all, like Rich, students in computational and systems biology at the School of Medicine.

The friends use the platform to highlight topics that interest them personally, widening the channel’s perspective and scope along the way. “Even though we’ve all known each other for a while, I feel like I’m always learning from them,” says Bhatt.

As the team has expanded, so has bioZone’s reach. In just a few years, the channel has amassed more than 1,500 subscribers. The UPMC Hillman Cancer Center Academy and the National Cancer Institute have sponsored the videos, setting the team up with microphones and lighting equipment and supporting their outreach to Pittsburgh schools. High schoolers who take part in the Hillman Academy’s mentored research program have promoted bioZone videos and created Instagram shorts.

Rich hopes bioZone’s outreach will one day expand to younger students. And she envisions some of their apprentices eventually taking over the channel to “keep this tradition going.”

—Lynnette Tibbott



For this year’s *Scope and Scalpel*, the annual student-run musical lampooning the med school experience, the graduating class had their sights set on the long-anticipated expansion of Alan Magee Scaife Hall. In “West Wing Story,” rival specialties—the *Scopes* and the *Scalpels*—face off to claim space in the new wing. Meanwhile, students look forward to no longer dealing with construction workers climbing through the windows of small-group sessions. (“That actually happened,” one student points out.) “The glove story of a lifetime” ran May 18 and 19, 2023, about a month after a soft opening of the new wing—while work continued in anticipation of a full-fledged debut later in 2023. (Learn more about the addition on page 12.)

—Andrew Doerfler