Two former Highline students are trying to get more people to create art.

Freshest Roots is a community based organization that was founded at Highline by Tony Innouvong and Edward Martinez, and is now partnered with Seattle’s Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute.

“Initially, Freshest Roots provides a space for the arts and under-represented communities specifically in South King County,” Innouvong said.

Freshest Roots features a monthly “expresso” open mic club where people are encouraged to come share their writing, poetry, art, comedy, music and love.

The expresso open mic is the longest-standing open mic in Seattle that is free and open to all ages, Innouvong said.

“Freshest Roots strives to share and inspire creativity and originality; to create awareness of social issues through art; to establish a sense of belonging and community; to celebrate culture and diversity; and to share our hearts and message with the world while making a difference,” Martinez said.

Like anything else, it started with an idea, Innouvong said. The pair brainstormed and then founded Freshest Roots in 2009.

Before Freshest Roots partnered with Langston Hughes, it held its open mic’s at local coffee shops and soon after, they named their open mic “expresso.”

“The organization makes me really happy and fortunate to work with amazing and talented people and groups in the community, greater Seattle has some of the most talented artists in the country and having the opportunity to work with them is more than what I can ask for,” Martinez said.

People with nothing to share are encouraged to come listen and support local talent.

“Our goal is to provide the youth and community members a platform to express themselves through the arts,” Martinez said.

Freshest Roots has been a success with a five-year’s-running open mic at the popular Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center in the Central District of Seattle.

“I believe Freshest Roots has been so successful for two reasons; there aren’t many platforms like Freshest Roots in Seattle and what we stand for really resonates with the community,” Innouvong said.

Freshest Roots’ open mic runs the first Friday of each month and welcomes people of all ages.

The event is free. However, donations are appreciated.

Freshest Roots also presents an annual Freshest Voices competition where contestants compete for a chance to win a crown, a performance slot at the following year’s competition, a professional photo shoot, and a cash prize.

The next Freshest Voices competition is tentatively scheduled for next spring.

Doors open for the open mic events at 7 p.m. and are at 104 17th Ave. S., Seattle.

For more information, contact keeptherootsalive@freshestroots.com, or visit www.freshestroots.com.