

Central Coast

June 2011

Family

News



Inside

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Child Development ... | 3 |
| Library Voice | 4 |
| Family Life | 6 |
| Fun & Games | 9 |
| Education | 11 |
| Local History | 12 |
| Fitness | 14 |
| Calendar | 17 |
| Around Town | 18 |
| Local Resources | 20 |
| Ask Christina | 22 |

25 Things To Do This Summer! / Potty Training Awareness / STEM Education Pg 2

Free! *Central Coast Family News*

Opinion

EDUCATION "CALL TO ARMS"

by Walter Reil

A growing number of sources are reporting on the dire and desperate conditions that our nation's schools face in trying to provide high-quality and continuously-advancing, state-of-the-art education. America's schools and their students, our children, are losing the battle. This is just the tip of the iceberg of a growing national emergency, a very loud and clear "Call to Arms."

Nothing is more critically important to our nation's future than education. Everything that America is today, our phenomenal advancements in technology and our high standard of living, has its roots in our educational system and home-grown imagination, creativity and innovation. Major developing issues facing America, including our deteriorating infrastructure and destructive impacts of world climate change, demand excellence in technical education to understand and resolve.

Our children are in very serious trouble. We must demand premier excellence in American education, to be the best country on Earth, second to none. We cannot accept anything less. This will require the direct involvement of all Americans and a major cultural change. Lack of proficiency and mastery of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education by American students has become deplorable, and destructive to our nation's future economy and security.

Increasing numbers of students are opting out of mentally-challenging STEM courses, or do not have access to exciting and rigorous STEM curriculum and enhanced hands-on STEM activities. Internationally, U.S. students rank 17th in science, and 25th in mathematics. America's future is extremely bleak, unless we take firm and decisive action immediately to reverse this situation.

It has been expressed repeatedly that American students must become "critical thinkers." But, for over 30 years, American adults have not demonstrated their own critical thinking when it comes to their children's education. It is time for all Americans to openly address the reality that we have created new generations of students who are being ignored, misguided and discarded, starting at home, where critical thinking and support must begin.

We can no longer pass on the full responsibility for our kid's education to our schools, as we have done for 50 years. It is imperative that American communities become directly involved in guiding and promoting excellence in our schools and providing enhanced STEM educational opportunities. America's recent goal of "No Child Left Behind" has become "America Left Behind and Out in the Cold." Our academically-gifted students have been ignored and forgotten, as we have tried to shove every student into a one-size-

fits-all education, resulting in national mediocrity in education, dramatically reducing the ability of high-achieving students to move forward quickly and receive the superior education they need to achieve, succeed, and become the future leaders of our nation.

CNN's program **Education in America: Don't Fail Me**, based on the exciting hands-on US FIRST International Robotics Competition program, squarely hit the target. Its sobering and powerful message is that we MUST make urgent and dramatic improvements in our schools, especially in STEM education, beginning in elementary school.

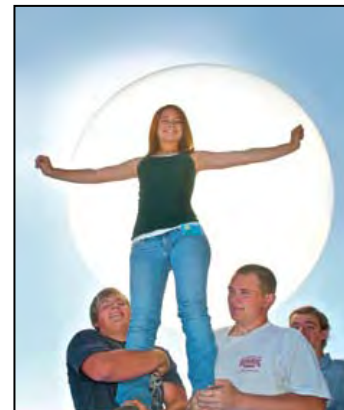
The message is beginning to be heard from Paso Robles to Lompoc. A first-ever, grassroots event on May 24th, the Central Coast STEM Education Forum, brings together 100 top leaders in education, business, government and non-profit STEM education organizations. This event attempts to recognize and understand our children's educational challenges, brainstorm ways of making improvements, and promote development of community partnerships to significantly enhance STEM education inside and outside of our schools.

Community involvement and support is

Cover Photo:

Teens at Endeavor Academy's STEM Balloon Fest 2009 in Paso Robles

Dennis Eamon Young Photography



a key element in turning this new goal into a reality. To learn more and become involved in supporting this effort, please contact the Endeavor Institute <http://www.endeavourinstitute.org> and the Discovery Institute of SLO <http://www.institutefordiscovery.org>.

Walter Reil was president of the Atascadero Education Foundation supporting K-12 performing arts and STEM education public outreach, including designing and chairing the installation of a hands-on STEM laboratory in the Monterey Road Elementary School.

Don't miss **STEM Showcase 2011**
Saturday, JUNE 4th 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
Cuesta College Student Center, Bld. 5400
Free Admission and Free Parking

The Discovery Institute for the Advancement of Science and Technology Education, in partnership with Cuesta College, Cal Poly, Endeavor Institute, and the County Office of Education host an exciting day of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics learning experiences for the whole family.

Fourth grade through college students from San Luis Obispo County and North Santa Barbara County will display and demonstrate their STEM projects.

Enjoy rocketry demonstrations, robotics competitions, and hands-on lessons provided by science teachers from Cal Poly's new Learn By Doing Laboratory. Prizes will be awarded to all presenters as well as certificates of participation from Sam Blakeslee.

A highlight this year will be a robotics competition between teams from Atascadero, Arroyo Grande, and Orcutt Academy.

We are proud to congratulate the Greyhound Revolutionary Robotics Team from Atascadero High School, who just won the FIRST Robotics World Championship! Check out their robot at www.greybots.com.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

"Telescope Robotics - Building the World's Largest Portable Telescope"
Russell Merle Genet, PhD, Research Scholar in Residence at Cal Poly, Adjunct Professor of Astronomy at Cuesta College, and the Director of the Orion Observatory.

Pioneer of the world's first fully robotic observatory (featured in the PBS special The Perfect Stargazer), and 51st President of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, Russ now teaches astronomy and guides research seminars at Cuesta College, and teaches short courses about the cosmos and humanity for Cal Poly, Cuesta College, and the Orion Institute. He has also authored 12 books and over 100 scientific papers. Currently, with members of the Central Coast Astronomical Society, Russ is designing and building the world's largest portable telescope.

Learn more at: www.institutefordiscovery.org

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Our goal is to connect Central Coast families with the resources they need to thrive!

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Central Coast Family News is published monthly with a readership over 30,000. Find FREE copies throughout San Luis Obispo County and North Santa Barbara County.

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Submission deadline: 15th of each month prior to publication

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