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SCHOOL CALENDAR WILL RETURN AFTER THE SUMMER BREAK

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Town Hall Kids Back on Stage at Beloved Theater

By Jean Follmer



Photo provided

After a devastating flood due to a ruptured fire safety sprinkler, which dumped 800 gallons of water into the upstairs theatre before flowing downstairs, soaking through the walls and floors last April, Lafayette's Town Hall Theatre experienced a temporary setback. The recently remodeled lobby was destroyed and the entire downstairs of

the theatre was flooded, while the hearts of the many actors, patrons and employees sunk at the news.

Some wondered if the treasured local theatre would close, but such thoughts were quickly cast aside and the show went on.

After a brief venture off-site, rehearsals and performances returned to the Town Hall Theatre and have con-

tinued throughout the reconstruction period. A recent performance of The Granny Awards under the direction of Emily Garcia attested to the theatre's staying power. The Granny Awards was performed by the Town Hall Kids Bravo Session 1 Group of actors, all children ages 7-11. Other Town Hall Kids performances scheduled this summer are:

- Bravo's The Best Little Theatre in Town directed by Dennis Markham – Aug. 1 at 2 and 4 p.m.
- Bravo's The Little Mermaid directed by Xanadu Bruggers – Aug. 22 at 4:30 and 6:30 p.m.
- Encore's (ages 11-14) Alice in Wonderland directed by Emily Garcia – Aug. 14 & 15 at 7 p.m.

Town Hall Theatre's Director of Education, Janice Peacock, expects the construction to come to a close shortly. "We're very close to being done. The target move back in date is July 24," she said. The office and lobby furniture and equipment were replaced through iReuse.com. "It's turning out to be even more beautiful than before."

For more information about upcoming performances, please visit www.thtc.org or call 283-1557.

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How Six Figure Income Families Get Thousands of Dollars in Free Money For College

Local man teaches free workshops to help parents save thousands in process

Moraga---East Bay parents that are planning on sending a child to college in the next few years, but aren't quite sure how to pay for it can now rest a little easier. Gerna Benz of Bay Area College Planners has been educating families in the community for over 15 years.

'It's really sad, but most parents that we talk to have done real well financially, but never found the time to save for college, and now they're facing a bill of \$18,000-\$45,000 a year, and they don't know who to turn to,' he says. 'Further, most of the time, all they hear is to not even bother applying for any aid because they make too much money. However, most of the time, that is simply not true even if they make a six-figure income.'

Gerna would know, because his group has worked with over 1400 families in the last 10 years ranging from single moms to corporate CEO's, and they say they can help anyone get through the process and save a bundle.... no matter how good of a student they have or how much money they make.

'I got started in this because I was a very good student, but no one told us anything about how to access money for college, or even how to pick a career...so I didn't go right away. But, I vowed that I would learn the process and devote my time to helping families not fall into the same trap that we did. 'Simply put, we show parents the truth that they aren't hearing anywhere else about how the college process really works and save thousands of dollars in the process.' Lamorinda parents will have a couple

opportunities to hear Gerna speak. He is teaching his class 'How to Give Your Kid a 4-Year College Education Without Going Broke!' on Saturday July 25th at the Orinda community Center located at 26 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563 from 12:00pm-1:15pm PM.

'We'll discuss everything from the greatest myths about the college process, to how to send your student to a fancy private school for less than the cost of a junior college...it'll be like learning how to get a brand new Lexus for the price of a used pick up truck,' he grins.

Topics will also include why private scholarships and 529 plans are a waste of time, how to double or even triple the amount of free money you receive from each school, and how to avoid the one mistake that will kill your chances of getting any money at all that almost every other parent will make this coming January, and much, much more.

'They will learn a ton, and I do my best to make the class fun,' he says. 'It's like I'm giving them a super bright flash light to navigate a pitch black cave, while all the other parents continue to stumble around blindly! 'Don't forget: the class is totally free, but seats are limited. Also, we are not sure when we will be teaching these classes in the East Bay again since my July and August calendar is already filling up, so come on out and see me.' You can reserve a seat online at www.baycollegeplanners.com or by calling our 24 hour reservation line at (877) 924-3726.

Bio-Tech Camp

Gives Students Insight into Science Careers

By Jennifer Wake



Bio-Tech Science Summer Camp students (left to right): Karen Schussman, Sarah Tomas, Melinda Schneider, Samantha Chang, Ashley Wong and Valerie Su

Photo Jennifer Wake

While many Lamorinda teens spent the week after the 4th of July lounging by the pool or heading to the beach, 58 students from high schools throughout Contra Costa County sat in lecture halls and visited local scientific research facilities learning about topics including cloning, forensics, stem cells, and disease detection and control.

The 6th Annual Bio-Tech Summer Science Camp was made possible by a consortium of industry, high school and community college partners, including the Contra Costa County Office of Education, Contra Costa Community College District, CSUEB – Concord Campus, and the Contra Costa Economic Partnership. The camp was taught by industry leaders, scientists, and local high school science teachers to high school juniors and seniors exploring careers in biotechnology.

The camp gave students a real-world glimpse into sciences often glamorized on TV.

Campolindo student Melinda Schneider – one of 13 Lamorinda students who attended the camp – said the forensics lecturer (Senior Criminalist Carolyn Weigand from

the Department of Justice Richmond Lab's Missing Persons DNA Program) thought the TV show CSI, although not always completely accurate, was a good hook to get people interested in the science.

"The actual science is not like CSI," added Acalanes High School junior Samantha Chang. Lectures offered students a glimpse into the real-life world of forensics and crime scene investigation, explaining the intricacies of the sciences and how they are utilized in criminal investigations.

"The forensics lectures took the idea of CSI and made it seem really interesting," Campolindo student Ashley Wong said. "I didn't think it related to biotechnology, but it's definitely the science involving crime."

For Sarah Tomas, who also attends Campo, the first day's lecture about human cloning was the most interesting topic since it's something that could happen in the near future. When asked about the ongoing ethical debate regarding human cloning, Tomas said, "If it's used for medical purposes, I don't find anything wrong with it."

For others, like Schneider and

Acalanes student Adrian Chow-Danel, the stem cell lecture was the most intriguing. Science Associate Zachary Scheiner, Ph.D., of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, discussed how scientists remove embryonic stem cells, the therapies stem cells are used for, and explained current clinical trials.

"I always wanted to go into this field and today's lecture confirmed my goal," Schneider said.

Following the lectures, students were given questions as a way to review what they had just learned and to journal their experience. In addition to lectures, students were able to visit different research facilities in the local area, including the Joint Genome Institute, John Muir Health and the Mt. Diablo Adult Education Surgical Technician Program.

During the trip to the Mt. Diablo facility, technicians performed a mock surgery on a dummy patient. "We had a lot of hands-on work, and learned the importance of sterilization of masks, gowns and surgical instruments," said Miramonte student Valerie Su, who wants to pursue a career in the medical field.

The week-long camp ended with students debating different issues, including cloning and genetic screening for healthcare in women.

Karen Schussman, who attends Bentley and has always been interested in neuroscience, was assigned the genetic screening topic, and was debating the con side. "Looking forward, this could create discrimination issues," she said. "It might create a separate class system for us. If someone had less fortunate DNA, their healthcare costs could go way up. Also, to have everything out there would tend to identify theft and a lack of privacy."

As for the camp, Schussman said, "This was all new territory. I wasn't sure what to expect."

Family Focus

Help Your Child Be a Good Listener

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while he gets to know something.

Wilson Mizner

US screenwriter (1876 - 1933)

Adults and parents can be good listeners, but not so much about the importance of teaching children good conversational listening skills. This isn't the same as encouraging them to listen more carefully to their teachers and parents, although that, too, is important. Rather, it means helping them learn how to be active listeners with their peers and others. Etiquette classes for children are increasingly popular, but more important than teaching which fork to use is learning how to politely and cooperatively converse with others.

We all appreciate those who show interest in us and listen carefully to what we say. These people usually show they are paying attention by making eye contact with us while we are talking, asking us follow-up questions, and/or commenting on what we communicated. We refer to this as active listening. Active listeners share the stage with us instead of trying to monopolize it.

When I conducted social skills groups for elementary and middle school students, it was always a challenge to train them to listen to each other. In the beginning of these groups, conversations would tend to go like this:

Child A: "I just got a new video game for my birthday!"

Child B: "Well, I got \$40 from my uncle for my last birthday."

Child C: "My birthday is next month and I want a new bike."

(Add two or three more children's responses to this mix. At this point I would want to chime in: "Well, I now have a headache from trying to get you to actually have a

conversation with each other.")

Listening well to others is a skill and often requires parental coaching and reinforcement to really take root. Young children, age four and under, are naturally egocentric. In this developmental phase, a child views himself as the center of his world and everything revolves around him. Children at this stage have the tough job of learning to share their toys, take turns, and follow directions.

By age five, children can begin to experience the world through the eyes of another person and to display empathy. They are ready to learn and practice good listening skills. The earlier you start, the easier it will be to establish this behavior. Here is one suggestion for helping your child develop into a good listener:

Sit with your child or together as a family, with no distractions. Ask your child a question which will evoke feelings, i.e., "How are you feeling about Daniel and his family moving away?" When he says, "I'm sad" or "I miss them," you can reflect back and say, "I understand. I bet it's hard for you. Are you going to be in touch with him?" Continue the conversation.

Then share with your child something that you're sad about (nothing involving him or anyone in the family), and ask him if he can say some words to help you. Thank him when he does and tell him his words helped you feel better.

Without making it too obvious what you are doing, practice this exercise over time using different emotions as a theme, including positive ones. Have him respond to your question while you listen. Then you can answer the same question while he listens to you. Some ideas could be a time he was proud of himself, what he did to help someone else, or

how he got over being scared of something – the dentist, the dark, or a roller-coaster ride.

Let your child know and practice how to respond in a caring way to what you or his siblings say. Be sure to reinforce this behavior by telling him how good it feels when he listens. Let him overhear you telling people what a good listener he is and how much you and others appreciate it. Catch him in the act as often as possible. Once the habit is established you only need to reinforce it occasionally.

You can also have fun with your child by making jokes about listening. For example, if you are talking and he is not responding, you can throw out some key words such as "party" or "dog" or the name of his favorite video game. Then, when he finally tunes in, you can tell him you were only teasing so he would pay attention.

Of course it helps if you can be a good listener yourself, so that you can serve as a model for your child. One of the many challenges of parenting is continually trying to improve ourselves so we can put our preaching into practice.



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist in Orinda and Walnut Creek. She can be reached at 925-376-9323 or margierye@yahoo.com

Uilkema Names New Summer Intern

Submitted by Stephen J. Dexter

Contra Costa County District 2 Supervisor Gayle B. Uilkema has named Annie Chung as her summer intern for 2009. She was selected through the Chinese American Political Association (CAPA), which places Asian-American high

school students in local, county, state, and federal level governmental offices. Chung – who will be a senior at Campolindo High School in Moraga this fall – is the daughter of Yiu Tak Chung and Hong Dai of Lafayette. She is the treasurer and

historian for the Leo Club at her school, an offshoot of the international volunteer organization, the Lions Club, and is also a student shift leader at Kaiser Permanente Hospital, where she volunteers every Wednesday.