

And the winner is ...



Acalanes High School teacher Susan Lane with freshman poster contest winner Cara Wolfe. Photo Denise Schreiner

Creative freshman Cara Wolfe at Acalanes High School had a banner day: winning first place in the student poster contest sponsored by Contra Costa County Schools Insurance and getting a \$100 check, not to mention an "A" on the poster itself. Cara's poster will be reproduced and distributed to all of the school districts in Contra Costa County.

While definitely pleased to receive a check, Cara wasn't immediately sure what to do with it and thought she'd put it in the bank. She wanted to incorporate bright colors and clear direction in the piece - mission accomplished. Second place went to fellow Acalanes student Julia Lauer, who is a sophomore.

Health and Safety Services manager Denise Schreiner said Acalanes Digital Design teacher Susan Lane has been invaluable in encouraging her students to take part in the contest, integrating it as part of her lesson plans. "It's a lot of work," said Lane, describing the effort the students have to put in to master the challenging professional software used to make the posters.

The contest is part of a larger effort to build awareness of slip, trip and fall prevention to decrease the incidences of the number one injury for teachers, administrators and school staff. The Contra Costa County Schools Insurance Group is a self-insured, self-administered Joint Powers Authority that provides health and safety services, workers' compensation and cost containment programs to member school districts within the county. *C. Tyson*

Trailing Remnants of Comet ISON

By Cathy Dausman



SMC physics and astronomy professor Ronald Olowin, Ph.D. Photo Cathy Dausman

It's not a star, but it is a media darling and according to Saint Mary's College professor and astronomer Ron Olowin, Ph.D. "everybody's following it."

"It" is Comet ISON, from the outer solar system's Oort Cloud, which came so close in its orbit around the sun Nov. 28 that scientists thought it had disintegrated completely. Hopes were raised when video captured by the ESA/NASA Solar and Heliospheric Observatory showed a dim streak of white material streaming away from the sun, suggesting that a small nucleus was intact.

But according to a Dec. 2 NASA report, "Whether that spot of light was merely a cloud of dust that once was a comet, or if it still had a nucleus ... is still unclear. It seems likely that as of Dec. 1 there was no nucleus left. By monitoring its changes in brightness over time, scientists can estimate whether there's a nucleus or not, but our best chance at knowing for sure will be if the Hubble Space Telescope makes observations later in December."

Although the remnants of ISON may not be visible, Olowin will discuss the significance of the comet event and how it relates to astronomy through the ages from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 9 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center outdoor amphitheater. Children can also make a fun comet craft at this free event.

Because comets are largely icy snowballs with gas and debris filled tails extending for millions of miles, Olowin says "comets come and go," referencing Comet Halley's winter 1986 appearance and Hale-Bopp in 1997. Comets simply bring more artifacts from the outer solar system down to Earth, Olowin explained from his college office, a galaxy-themed tie bedecking his shirt. A dozen more astronomy and science-themed ties were draped close by - the professor selects his tie to match his lecture material. "You and I are star stuff," he said.

If ISON behaves, he said, earthlings can learn more about the quality of water and organic materials contained within. But even without the spectacle of a comet, he noted that looking skyward creates a "harvest of wonder" for us all.

For event details, visit www.lafayettelib.org/calendar/programs/family.html. For more information about Comet ISON, visit www.nasa.gov/ison.

TEEN SCENE

Music for a Good Cause

By Andrew Wang



Andrew Wang and friends perform "Music for a Good Cause." Photos Cynthia Brian

Have you ever gone to the farmers' market, train station or public square when a musician was playing, and felt a whole new emotional world flow out from his guitar or fiddle, the soaring melodies permeating through the air and brightening the mood with a whiff of freshness and vigor? I have always been entranced and uplifted by the music of street performers, and at the same time inspired to share my own music with others.

On Veteran's Day the Campolindo Band and Orchestra performed classic American tunes for retired veterans at the Veterans Home of West Los Angeles. Two busloads of 80 high school music students hauled timpani, chimes, and other instruments to Los Angeles in order to commemorate the veterans for their service. A small crowd of veterans assembled to attend the performance, some with physical disabilities and nervous ticks, but almost all forced themselves to overcome physical hardship to stand up and salute proudly when their division's march was played. "It was an honor playing for the veterans," reflects cellist Brian Davis. "The experience made me think about the power of music to uplift and inspire."

"Music communicates directly with the soul," conductor Johnny Johnson says. "Performing music for our community and others is an important public service."

A similar event happened on Halloween as a part of the "Letters for Literacy" event for local literacy charity "Be the Star You Are!" A chamber group of friends and I performed some spooky and whimsical tunes at the Rheem Valley Shopping Center. The trick-or-treaters happily rejoiced in the combined atmosphere of bright harmonies and free candy. "It feels like we're trick-or-treating in Disneyland," exclaimed junior Yaman Jandali, who was trick-or-treating at local businesses with friends. Little kids dressed in vampire and princess costumes flocked around to enjoy the music and show their support by stuffing a

dollar or two in the donation box. Even parents, who weren't trick-or-treating, showed great interest in the music and the charity, clapping along with the melodies and taking flyers. Performers and audience members tapped and danced to the rhythm of the music and had great fun.

Local groups are taking advantage of their musical abilities to promote good causes. Stay tuned. On Dec. 21, local teen musicians will perform at the Orinda Library to raise funds for Typhoon Haiyan disaster relief. Music is the universal language of connection and collaboration.



Young trick-or-treaters make a donation for Letters for Literacy as they listen to the orchestra play spooky music.

Andrew Wang, a volunteer with "Be the Star You Are!" charity, is a student at Campolindo High School. Besides writing and reporting, he enjoys programming on his computer, playing the piano and violin, and tossing Frisbees.

Teen Scene is YOUR voice. If you have something to say or have writing skills and want to be part of our Teen Scene team, email our Teen Coach, Cynthia Brian, Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com.

The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

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