

Published February 11th, 2015

Science Teacher Wins Award

By Cathy Tyson



Mike Meneghetti in his classroom at Stanley Middle School holds up one of the many robots that students have created. Photo Cathy Tyson

Winner of one of three Warren Eukel Teacher Trust Grants, longtime resident and popular Stanley Middle School science teacher Mike Meneghetti was humbled with an award given to him at a recent Lafayette City Council meeting. He grew up in Lafayette, attending local schools from Springhill Elementary all the way to Acalanes - class of '75 - and went on to get his teaching credential in San Francisco. The award is given for a teacher's extraordinary commitment to their students.

Council Member Mark Mitchell has known Meneghetti since they were both in first grade, and his kids have gone through Meneghetti's classes. In front of the robust crowd gathered to celebrate his achievement, Mitchell wanted to thank him personally for "making science so enjoyable and encouraging their curiosity." He added that both kids went into the sciences: geology and engineering.

In giving the award, Mayor Brandt Andersson also has a personal connection to Meneghetti. His daughter enjoyed his class, calling it a "truly unique experience."

"This is amazing," said Meneghetti receiving the award. "This is my 32nd year of teaching and it's still fun, in large part due to an incredibly supportive administration, amazing colleagues, a community that values education, and Lafayette's

education foundation, (which has) supported the science program at Stanley for years. Thank you all very much."

For the last 22 years the youthful and energetic Meneghetti has been teaching sixth grade science and engineering/robotics to eighth graders. He credits the incredible support from foundation donations that make the robotics program possible, which has rejuvenated his career.

He spells out his philosophy on his Back to School Night handout: "I emphasize knowing versus memorizing, developing theories and explanations, drawing conclusions, observing and giving my students plenty of opportunities to use and develop critical thinking skills."

The Robotics class features a series of challenges throughout the school year; the last group project had four classmates each programming their homemade robots to perform a choreographed dance together to music. The current mind blowing challenge is to program a robot to deliver one marble at each of three stations along a path with increasingly narrow openings. Students Cierra Taylor and Sami Samuels happened to be in his classroom at lunchtime and were happy to have their robot "Fergie" included in Meneghetti's photo. Paul Verbanszky of Campolino High School and Karen Kreider Short of St. Francis of Assisi School were also awarded Eukel Teacher Trust grants.

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