

Hands-on access to STEM activities at LLLC Hackathon



Photo provided

By Lou Fancher

Free form, digital learning—the kind with no homework!—is on tap Feb. 23 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Community Hall. “Hack the Future 23” is a free, all-day extravaganza for youth ages 10-19 that offers demonstrations and hands-on access to STEM

activities led by tech industry professionals.

Presented by learningtech.org and led by volunteers of Tri Valley-based Hack the Future, support from the Friends of Lafayette Library, LLLC Foundation and Contra Costa County library system provides lunch, T-shirts and multiple activity stations. Pro-

gramming in JavaScript, Unity, Scratch, Python, C++, Chatbot; as well as exploration of virtual reality, soldering, micro:bit, raspberry pi and 3D Printing offer opportunity to sample the latest software and hardware technology.

“Digital literacy has become important to libraries as we have seen the dependence on computer and electronics increase in the workplace, schools and in the home,” says Teen Services Library Assistant Orlando Guzman. Understanding and facility with emerging technologies, Guzman emphasizes, has become not only a passion for many people, but an expected skill in the 21st century.

Library programs that allow students to tinker in non-academic settings without the pressure of grades invite them to take new risks or develop deeper understanding of prior interests. Enthusiasm for the

after-school or holiday workshops has grown enough to cause a remodeling of the library’s computer technology lab into a more open, collaborative classroom and maker space.

“The library has become a free place to explore all (digital literacy) with books, DVDs, online resources, guest speakers, and workshops to learn new skills and acquire a basic understanding,” says Guzman. Especially for youth, he says concepts involved with robotics, coding, 3D printing and other tech activities simultaneously encourage team problem solving and individual creativity. Free or low-cost programs open the adventure to youth regardless of economic situation. Mostly if not entirely untethered from fees and the “need to achieve,” youth thrive especially in the game-like atmosphere of events like “Hack the Future.”

Expecting about 70-100 youth to attend, Guzman suggests Hack the Future’s attraction is attributable in part to the lively spirit, but also due to the organization’s high-profile founders. “One of the founders of Hack the Future is Allan Alcorn, a founder of Atari and the creator of Pong, one of the first, if not the first commercially successful coin-op video game. As another fun aside, Al Alcorn also has the distinction of being one of Steve Jobs’ first bosses.”

Youth attending the hackathon are encouraged to bring their own laptops. Guzman estimates the library will have 20 available to lend for the day. For more information about recommended software downloads to install prior to attending the event, visit <https://hackthefuture.org/software/>. To access a required medical information sheet, go to <https://hackthefuture.org/documents/medical.pdf>.

For information and to register for the program, visit <https://ccplib.evanced.info/signup/eventdetails?eventid=176765&lib=11>

Campolindo student musicians help teach the teachers for a day



Photo Kathi Torres

Johnny Johnson conducting the Campolindo Symphonic Band

Submitted by Kathi Torres

Before dawn on a recent Saturday morning, the Campolindo Symphonic Band and their music director Johnny Johnson boarded buses headed for San Jose State University. Their destination was a workshop for the Bay Section of California Music Educators who had gathered to hone their craft and gain new skills.

As the Campo students took their places with instruments in hand, music teachers from throughout the Bay Area sat behind them on stage to watch and learn. Dr. Eric Hammer introduced “The Art of Teaching from the Podium,” designed to impart effective ways of developing musicianship within the structure of large student ensembles. Campolindo Symphonic Band was happy to serve as the test subjects when two young mu-

sic instructors took the podium to learn how (and how not) to teach music.

During two mini-rehearsal sessions, teachers were coached on effective utilization of skills and behaviors. Then Johnny Johnson showed them all how it’s done, concluding the morning by conducting a movement from Ticheli’s “Four Shaker Songs.”

As anyone who has witnessed a fledgling musician learn to play an instrument can attest, it takes a special kind of person to teach music. It requires much more than conveying the right note at the right time. Teachers must encourage, inspire, and promote cooperation and synergy among a diverse group of kids, with the goal of preparing their students for a lifetime of music.

Lamorindans are notably supportive of the arts and our children are often the lucky beneficiaries of that commitment, as Campo’s performance for the Music Educators’ workshop proved. The

public is invited to hear their outstanding musicianship for themselves at two upcoming concerts: Strings Orchestra on Wednesday, Feb. 13, and the

Symphonic Band on Thursday, Feb. 21, at 7:30 p.m. in the Campolindo Performing Arts Center.

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Cantor’s Concert ‘Coming Together: Songs of Unity and Community’ at Temple Isaiah



Photo provided

Cantor Leigh Korn Submitted by Jen Boxerman

Temple Isaiah’s Cantor Leigh Korn presents “Coming Together: Songs of Unity and Community,” featuring a stellar cast of cantors from across the country at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21 in the Temple Isaiah Sanctuary in Lafayette.

Joining Cantor Korn will be: Cantor Sara Hass of Temple Israel, Long Beach, California; Cantor Juval Porat of Beth Chaim Chadashim, Los Angeles, California; Cantor Jen Rother, Temple Shomer Emunim, Sylvania, Ohio; Cantor Rollin Simmons, Congregation Emanu El, Houston, Texas; Cantor Dan Singer, Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, New York, New York; Cantor Dan Sklar, Temple Israel, Westport, Connecticut; and Cantor Shirah Sklar, Temple Shalom, Norwalk, Connecticut; with Daniel Lockert on piano.

“At this year’s Cantor’s Concert, we will be celebrating the strength of music to bring us together,” Korn said. “The concert will feature some of the most exciting vocal and musical talents in the Reform cantorate to celebrate both music about coming together and music that brings us together. Whether at concerts, social events, or services, music can help us connect, cooperate, and care for each other. When we are in sync musically with our neighbors in the pews, we are strengthened in mind and spirit.”

The concert is sponsored by the Cantor’s Music Fund, with a dessert reception sponsored by Women of Isaiah. (Special thanks to co-chairs Karen Goldberg and Lynn Epstein.) Tickets are \$36. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

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