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Environmental Volunteers

Innovative environmental science education that improves student learning

Newsletter for EV Community

March 2011

EcoCenter



To see pictures of the EcoCenter's restoration journey, click on the photo above.

To learn more about the EcoCenter, click [here](#).

Showing Their True Colors



In This Issue

[The Decline of Science?](#)

[School Services Update](#)

[Current Volunteer Training](#)

[Who's News: Franziska Zinner](#)

[Summer Programs](#)

[Yellowstone in Winter: Or How I Broke my Leg](#)

[California Tiger Salamander](#)

The Decline of Science?

by Allan Berkowitz, Executive Director



Here in Silicon Valley you would think that science education would be paramount. In California, home to science, tech, and biotech companies up and down the state, you would think science education would thrive. The numbers suggest otherwise.

According to the just-released 2009 National Assessment of Education Progress ("The Nation's Report Card"), California's 4th graders scored second to last in science proficiency. By 8th grade, California's students descended to last among all states.

I've previously shared with you the results of a UC Berkeley study of Bay Area elementary school teachers. 80% of K-5th grade teachers spend 60 minutes or less per week on science and 16% spend no time on science at all.

And one more fact to share: some of the kids we work with from very low-income communities like East Palo Alto, Alviso, and Redwood City have never visited the local natural sites until they participated in our

Purple Chinese House

Springtime is the best season to see wildflowers. From March through May, our landscape blooms with colors. Take advantage of a beautiful day and visit one of California's many state parks which offer acres of wildflowers to view.

If you have any fun facts or pictures to share with the EV Community, please submit them to justyne@evols.org.

Quick Links

[Want to Volunteer](#)
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DONATE NOW!

Environmental Volunteers

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field trips.

All that is the background to why what we do is so important.

The EV is recognized as a leading provider of environmental science education. We like to see ourselves as inspiring a love of nature and developing stewardship - and we do that. But we also are very serious science educators and we are very serious about delivering quality science education that improves student learning and increases science resources for local classrooms.

- For so many classrooms, the only meaningful science education experience they have is through EV programs. That is why we are focusing on schools willing to commit to multiple programs delivered over multiple consecutive years. It provides better science education and more of it.
- Studies show a direct correlation between a lack of green spaces in urban neighborhoods and childhood obesity. For so many students the opportunity to hike a forest, explore a tidepool, and observe bay birds is an eye opening, non-electronic, healthy endeavor (and it's fun, too!).
- Where else do students interact with someone so passionate about birds that they make young minds soar to new heights?
- How often do students find someone who makes an earthquake *more fascinating than frightening*?
- How wonderful that young minds can have so much fun making eggs float, counting drops of water on a penny, and exploring ice and steam....all in the name of science.



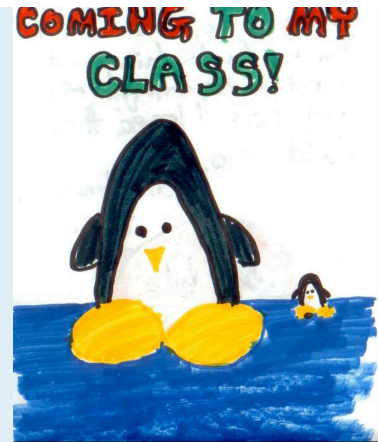
Every day of the school year our teaching docents positively impact students and they impact you and me. In students they inspire wide-eyed wonderment, ignite excitement about newts, curiosity about water, and interest in knowing more. And they impact you and me by giving us a ray of hope in response to the depressing state of science education in our schools.

School Services Update

by Laurie Lopez, Programs Coordinator

**THANK YOU
FOR**

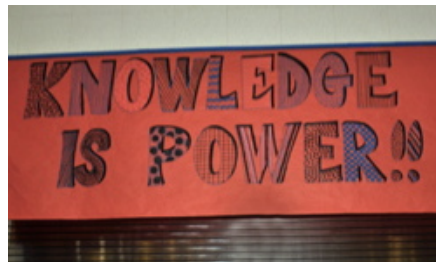
For the months of **January** and **February** our volunteers gave a total of 681 hours to serve 1611 students in 69 classrooms and 14 field trips. Energy & Natural Resources had the biggest request for services, with Marine Ecology and Early California Indian Life close behind. School Yard Snoops were the most requested field trip and the Palo Alto Baylands, Jasper Ridge, Huddart Park, Stevens Creek and Fitzgerald all tied for second with two field trips each!



Thank you by one of the children we serve.

Thanks for all that you do, EVs!

Current Volunteer Training



Do you know anyone who would enjoy offering children hands-on experiences in the wonders of science and nature? We have one more training class this spring. It is the last chance for you, or someone you know, to join the EV family this school year.

The next training will be the **"Living in California" module**, and starts on Thursday, March 17th at our Palo Alto office. This course covers four of our nine subject areas: Earthquake Geology, Water Science, Early California Indians, and Energy and Natural Resources.

To sign up or receive more information, please contact Brittany Sabol, our Education and Training Director, by email: education@evols.org or by phone: (650) 961-0545.

Thanks for helping us recruit more volunteers so that we can continue inspiring thousands of children to become responsible stewards of the earth.

Who's News: Franziska Zinner

by Jan Whitmer

New to the Environmental Volunteers last fall, **Franziska Sinner** joins us with sterling credentials. She is a climate change policy expert with varied experience working on environmental issues. Presently, she is



freelancing for some European clients and working for a nonprofit in San Francisco called Green-E, which certifies environmentally-friendly products and provides consumers with information about clean energy choices.



Franziska grew up in Hamburg, Germany, went to school and married her husband Henrik Lemke before moving to Copenhagen, Denmark, where she worked as a consultant on carbon offsetting projects for seven years. Franziska and Henrik moved to the Bay Area last summer, as he is working for the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center as a scientist.

Outside of professional life, Franziska says she is "crazy" about ...

Want to read what Franziska is "crazy" about? Click [here](#) to find out.

Summer Programs

Vandy Shrader, Summer Programs Director

Summer will be here soon, and NOW is a great time to register for S.N.A.K.E. Camp or Explore!, the Environmental Volunteers' fun and informative summer programs. This year, both camps will meet at JLS Middle School in Palo Alto, adjacent to Mitchell Park.

S.N.A.K.E. Summer Camp

S.N.A.K.E. Camp (for kids entering Grades 1-5)

This year, S.N.A.K.E. Camp will run for 4 sessions: EARTH (June 20-24), SEA (June 27-July 1), Day Trippers (July 5-8) and SKY (July 11-15). Our activities will include hiking and hunting for hidden geocaches; swimming

in the JLS Pool; squid dissection; trips to the beach, Safari West animal park, Chabot Space & Science Center, Hiller Aviation Museum; and LOTS MORE! As always, campers will have plenty of time for tree climbing, park exploring, meeting new friends, and arts and crafts. Click [here](#) to learn more about S.N.A.K.E. Camp.

EXPLORE!

EXPLORE! (for Explorers entering Grades 6-8)

Explore will run for 3 sessions (July 18-22, July 25-29, and August 1-5) of exciting Eco-Adventures, including experiencing the San Francisco Ropes Course; sailing San Francisco Bay on an 82-foot wooden sailing ship, while learning about the Bay's ecosystems; learning to surf in the ocean; learning to rock climb on real rocks; kayaking Elkhorn Slough; hunting for hidden geocaches; learning how to survive in the wilderness; and expeditions to the beach, Safari West animal park, and IFly indoor skydiving. Click [here](#) to learn more about Explore!

For more information-including how you can qualify for discounts-or to register for S.N.A.K.E. Camp or Explore!, please visit the Summer

Programs web [page](#).

Click [here](#) to see our camp flyer...and please feel free to share the flyer with your friends!

Yellowstone in Winter: Or How I Broke my Leg...

by Marc Burton, Encore Fellow

Many of you that have recently stopped by the EV offices have noticed me hobbling around on crutches (I've now graduated to a single cane). As there is a story behind every cast, I thought I'd officially tell mine. In late January a group of 5 friends and I made a winter trip to West Yellowstone to experience first hand the wonders of that ecosystem.

As the Park is "officially" closed for the winter, the only access is by guided tour, with snow-machines being the preferred method of travel. We'd contracted out with a local company for 2 days of touring, covering anywhere from 100-150 miles each day before returning at night to our cabin in West

Yellowstone. Bright and early Friday morning we arrived at the outfitters and they proceeded to gear us up head to toe in snowsuits and helmets. After a 10-minute introduction to your snow machine and a review by the guide of the rules and regulations for riding in Yellowstone you're off and on your way. I



should mention that the machines are low emission and designed for park use, quiet, comfortable (heated seats, warm air on hands and feet) and very user friendly. One need not be an experienced rider to feel comfortable.

The weather was actually pretty good given that we were in Northern Montana in January, 20 degrees with light snow with good visibility. Within 15 minutes of entering the park we started to see scattered herds of Bison, and shortly after we had our first encounter. A group of about 15 Bison were...

What did the Bison do next? And how did this break Marc's leg, click [here](#).

California Tiger Salamander

by Garik Iosilevsky, Intern

Have you ever seen an animal smile? The California Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma Californiense*) is always smiling. This Salamander is glossy black with yellowish spots and stripes on its back and tail,

which is why it has the word Tiger in its name. The yellow on its body even outlines its mouth in a way that it makes it appear that the



animal is smiling. This beautiful creature lives in annual grasslands open woodlands, and low foothills with pools or ponds for breeding. It eats things such as insects, algae, mosquito larvae, and tadpoles. The adult males can grow to be about 8 inches long, where the females can grow to be about 7

inches long. It has a long, stocky body, a rounded snout, and eyes that stick out a little. This species is truly a sight to see, and if you ever spot one you should consider yourself lucky.

Although this salamander likes to put on a nice smile for you, on the inside it is really not too happy with the humans. ...

Curious about why the CA Tiger Salamander is not too happy with humans? Click [here](#) to find out why.

Photo Credits

EcoCenter Update: **Andrei Sarna-Wojcicki**

Fun Fact: **Wikipedia**

The Decline of Science?, School Services Update & Training Update:

Judy Kramer

Who's News: **Provided by Subject**

Yellowstone in Winter: Or How I Broke my Leg: **Marc Burton**

California Tiger Salamander: **Provided by Author**

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