Authors and Innovators Inspire Students

It’s amazing that a photograph of a cigarette butt could spark a worldwide initiative to eliminate litter, but that is exactly how Litterati came to be.

Jeff Kirschner, Litterati’s founder, spoke March 23 to 750 students at Chalone Peaks Middle School in King City as part of “Festival to the Schools,” an outreach program sponsored by the Carmel Ideas Foundation, which produces the Pebble Beach Authors and Ideas Festival.

He told students that Litterati was based on a simple idea: take a picture of litter, post it on Instagram with the hashtag, “litterati,” and remove the trash. Today, the anti-litter campaign has grown to include a website (litterati.org), over 17,000 followers on Instagram, and a long list of cities, companies and schools that want to join the movement.

“One school used data from the Instagram photos to list and rank the litter found on campus,” Kirschner said. “At the top of the list were drinking straw wrappers from the school cafeteria.” The information prompted changes in the way the school purchased and dispensed straws.

Earlier in March, “Festival to the Schools” brought renowned author and speaker, Dr. Ramon Resa, to Main Street Middle School in Soledad, where he conducted two assemblies and shared some of the experiences featured in his book, “Out of the Fields: My Journey from Farmworker Boy to Pediatrician.”

After the assemblies, Dr. Resa autographed copies of his book, which were provided to 200 students by “Festival to the Schools.”
Message From the Superintendent:  

Highlights from March

Spring is a wonderful time of year. It is the season when we proudly showcase and honor the many diverse achievements of our students in Monterey County. It is an exciting time. It is also a lot of fun.

On March 2, I was delighted to take part in Read Across America, the annual reading and literacy event held on the birthday of Dr. Seuss. I read “Our California,” by Pam Munoz Ryan, to a classroom of students at Marshall Elementary School in Seaside. It was such a joy to spend time with them. I highly encourage everyone to explore volunteer reading opportunities during next year’s event. I am sure you will find it very rewarding.

Some of Monterey County’s most outstanding students took center stage in March. Over 300 students participated in the Monterey County Science and Engineering Fair at California State University Monterey Bay. We also crowned a new champion at the Countywide Spelling Bee held at Hartnell College. History Day examined Leadership and Legacy, and twenty 8th grade students were awarded trips to Washington D.C. for their excellent essays on the United States Constitution. You can read more about these stories in this edition of MCOE News.

You will also learn how two of the country’s largest technology companies are opening their doors to high school students with an interest in science and technology.

Finally, don’t miss the photo page, where the Early Head Start program showcases the work of very young artists, and our Migrant Education program offers a day of student-to-student mentoring.
Spelling Bee Champ is Crowned

It took 13 rounds and 169 words before Monterey County had its new spelling champ. Nina Harmer, a 6th grade student at All Saints’ Day School, out-spelled 48 other students from schools throughout Monterey County to win the Countywide Spelling Bee, held March 8 at the Western Stage Theatre at Hartnell College.

Nina correctly spelled the following words: cinnamon, dross, refugee, Olympian, homburg, mahatma, duenna, bureaucracy, allegro, marzipan, mayonnaise, and altruism. Her winning word: amphibious.

Science Fair Showcases Top Student Projects

After reviewing hundreds of projects, the judges at the 2015 Monterey County Science & Engineering Fair did something they’ve done before: they awarded top honors to Kapil Sinha, a junior at Salinas High School. Sinha won the competition in 2014, and co-authored 2013’s winning project with his sister, Aradhana.

Nearly 500 students submitted individual or team projects for this year’s competition, held March 13-15, at California State University Monterey Bay. The top three Senior Division projects will advance to participate in the Intel International Science & Engineering Fair, to be held in Pittsburgh, PA in May.


Second place: Rohan Bhushan, Monterey High School, Gravitactic Effects of Copper Pollution on Glucose Metabolism in Euglena gracilis.

Third place: Chaitra Subbarao, Salinas High School, Molecular Detection of Spinach Downy Mildew before Symptom Appearance.

The judges also chose 22 top projects across the Junior (grades 6-8) and Senior (grades 9-12) Divisions to participate in the California State Science Fair, May 18 and 19 in Los Angeles.
Constitution Project Sends Students to Washington D.C.

Twenty Monterey County students will visit Washington D.C. as winners of the annual Monterey County U.S. Constitution Project, sponsored by the Dan and Lillian King Foundation.

Now in its third year, the U.S. Constitution Project was created to enrich the lives of Monterey County 8th graders with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Students studied the Constitution in their 8th grade U.S. history classes, and were asked to write an essay about the document’s impact on both the country and their personal lives. The essays were submitted to the Dan and Lillian King Foundation, which selected four winners from each school.

The students represent five participating Monterey County middle schools: Main Street Middle School (Soledad Unified School District), North Monterey County Middle School (North Monterey County Unified School District), Washington Middle School (Salinas Union High School District), Los Arboles Middle School (Monterey Peninsula Unified School District), and Chalone Peaks Middle School (King City Union School District).

History Day Projects Focus on Leadership

The 25th Annual History Day, sponsored by Lyceum of Monterey County and the Monterey County Office of Education, was held March 7th at Los Arboles Middle School and produced an impressive array of papers, posters, exhibits, performances, documentaries and websites based on the theme, “Leadership and Legacy in History.”

Students representing All Saints’ Day School, the International School of Monterey, Los Arboles Middle School, Seaside Middle School, Stevenson School and York School participated.

Student projects were judged in eight group and individual categories. Top projects in each category will represent Monterey County at the State Finals in Rocklin, CA, on May 8-9, 2015.
Fast Takes: Students and Staff on the Move

The transition from middle school to high school can be a challenge. On March 7, MCOE’s Migrant Education – Region XVI presented a day of workshops at CSUMB, aimed at making that transition easier. Topics for the Close Up Middle School conference included social skills, the benefits of a good education, and services available to migrant students. Seventy-three middle school students attended.

“Little Hands, Big Possibilities” showcased the artistic creations of children under the age of three. The 70-piece exhibit was sponsored by MCOE’s Early Head Start (EHS) program to raise awareness of the learning that happens during the infant and toddler years.

The Monterey County Home Charter School held its annual Science Fair on March 10 at the MCOE offices. Projects included, “Buoyancy & Density,” “Burning Earth,” “Transfer Ink,” and “Does Music Affect the Heart Rate.”

Teams from 16 Monterey County high schools and middle schools participated in the 6th annual Migrant Education Region XVI Speech & Debate Tournament, March 21 at Salinas High School. Winning teams and individuals will complete in the state finals, to be held at Monterey High School in May.

Submit your picture today. If you have pictures from a student or staff event that you’d like to see published, please send them to barrybrown@monterey.k12.ca.us with a brief description of the event or activity, along with the names and departments represented.
Students Take Technology Tours

You might call it a tech trek or the ultimate Google search, but for 39 students looking for advice on education and career, it was the opportunity of a lifetime.

The students are just back from a four-day trip to Redmond, Washington, where they toured Microsoft’s corporate headquarters. Earlier in the month, the same group visited Google’s headquarters in Mountain View.

The trips were organized by MCOE’s Migrant Education Region XVI for students who are high achievers in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math.

“We wanted a program that would help our students fill in the blanks, to find out how to get from here to there,” said Jorge Morales, the program’s Secondary School Advisor.

The centerpiece of the Google visit was a panel discussion featuring young Google professionals, who shared their own experiences as minority students growing up in Monterey County.

“They knew firsthand about the challenges facing migrant students because that’s how they grew up,” said Morales. “It was a struggle, but they worked hard, excelled, went to major universities, and are now succeeding with Google.”

The Microsoft trip covered four days, March 29-April 1. Students toured the company’s headquarters, and visited other sites including the Microsoft-founded Experience Music Project Museum, the University of Washington, Pacific Science Center, Museum of Flight, and attended a science fair at the Microsoft headquarters.

MCOE’s Migrant Education program visited Microsoft once before, in 2003. Organizers plan to make it an annual event, and hope to add a tour of the Boeing factory in Everett, Washington to future trips.
Going the Extra Mile with JUST RUN

A longtime partner of Monterey County schools has received national recognition. JUST RUN, a national fitness program developed in association with the Big Sur International Marathon, was recently named Youth Program of the Year at the Running USA conference in New Orleans.

The JUST RUN program began in 2005 to help promote fitness and healthy lifestyle choices, while combatting obesity and its related illnesses. Since its inception, 75,000 children in 28 states have logged over 2 million miles.

This website-based program is offered to teachers free of charge, and can supplement or fulfill physical activity requirements.

Participating local schools can also enter the By the Bay Kids’ 3K race, held yearly in April at Lover’s Point Park in Pacific Grove. This year’s race is scheduled for Saturday, April 25, 2015.

You can learn more about the JUST RUN program at http://www.justrun.org/Home.htm.

Hope Services is MCOE’s New E-Waste Recycling Partner

The Monterey County Office of Education recently partnered with Hope Services as exclusive e-waste recycler.

Hope Services is the largest and oldest provider of services to people with developmental disabilities in Central California.

Collection teams from Hope Services gather unused or unwanted electronics, and sell the e-waste to its partner ECS Refining for responsible recycling. The revenue generated is used to employ people with disabilities who are involved in the collection, sorting, and dismantling of components.
Welcome to the Monterey County Office of Education. Please join us in working together to prepare our students for the future. Preparing students for success requires a unified and coordinated effort between home, school and the community.

The Monterey County Office of Education provides leadership to galvanize our community around support for the public’s educational system.

Our goal is to equip every student to thrive in the global economy, to enrich the cultural and intellectual resources of their community and state, and to contribute to a strong and democratic American society.

Monterey County has many world-renowned resources. And, of them all, our children are our most precious resource and hope for the future.

Please send items for publication, comments and suggestions to Barry Brown at barrybrown@monterey.k12.ca.us. or Teri James at tjames@monterey.k12.ca.us.

**Board of Education Resolutions**

The Monterey County Board of Education honored Jim Rear for his distinguished career as a teacher, coach and Executive Director of Sunrise House. The resolution cited Mr. Rear’s many positive contributions to the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse in Monterey County.

Joanna Rios, a student at Rancho Cielo, was the winner of the Cesar Chavez Day essay contest sponsored by MCOE’S Alternative Education program. She was presented with a plaque commemorating Cesar Chavez Day at the Board of Education’s March 18 meeting.