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One of the features in our Education Bulletin this month focuses on the Silicon Valley Reads program. The kick-off event for Silicon Valley Reads 2010 takes place on January 27.

Our office is a long-time partner of Silicon Valley Reads, because we strongly believe in its goals: to promote reading and literacy, to broaden the exposure to and appreciation of good literature, and to build community.

Everyone at every age can appreciate the value of a good book. When children develop a love of reading, they begin a habit that offers a lifetime of personal enjoyment and betterment.

Please join us as we celebrate the joy of reading, this month and throughout the year.

Charter School Summit

Russlynn H. Ali, assistant secretary of civil rights in the U.S. Department of Education, will deliver the keynote address of the Charter School Summit, to be held at the Santa Clara County Office of Education on January 30.

Also featured at the summit are State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell, California Secretary of Education Glen W. Thomas, and California Director of Charter Schools Carol Barkley.

The rapid growth of charter schools in Santa Clara County, and concerns about effects on neighborhood public schools, led to the call for the summit by Anna Song, president of the Santa Clara County Board of Education, and Board Member Joseph Di Salvo. The summit is being facilitated by the COE Charter Schools Department.

Registration for the summit, which will run from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., is available on-line. For more information, call (408) 453-3601 or email CharterSchoolsDept@sccoe.org.

Board elects Song, Mah as officers

The Santa Clara County Board of Education met December 9. Among the items on the board agenda from that date, the board:

- Elected Anna Song (above left) president of the board, and
the New Year.

Upcoming at the County Office

What: 2010 Budget Perspectives Workshop
When: Jan. 13, 1:30-5 p.m.
Where: County Office of Education
Presented by: School Innovations & Advocacy
Why: Insights and analysis will help districts plan budgets
Register here.

Silicon Valley Reads kicks off

Michael Pollan, author of In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto, will appear at the Silicon Valley Reads 2010 kick-off event on January 27 at the Heritage Theatre in Campbell.

The featured book for Silicon Valley Reads, an examination of what is wrong with the American diet, won a James Beard Foundation Book Award and was number one on the New York Times bestseller list for six weeks when published in 2008.

His on-stage interview by Mercury News columnist Mike Cassidy will begin at 7:30 p.m. Admission to the event is free, and admission is on a first-come, first-seated basis.

Companion children’s books for Silicon Valley Reads are: for children in grades K-3, Tops & Bottoms by Janet Stevens, a humorous story of a partnership between Bear and Hare to grow and share vegetables; for youngsters in grades 4-8, Seedfolks by Paul Fleischman, a novel about how a girl’s garden has a positive impact on the lives of 12 neighbors; and this year, a book has been added for pre-school youngsters: Carrot Soup by John Segal.

Christmas in the Park: An up-close look

When Chandler Tripp School students visit San Jose’s Christmas in the Park, the “Do Not Touch the Displays” sign is put away. The preschoolers with vision impairments are able to enjoy the brightly colored, animated scenes with their hands.

The Santa Clara County Office of Education operates
special education preschool classes at Chandler Tripp for children with visual and developmental disabilities. The annual tour of Christmas in the Park for the preschoolers on December 4 offered special “behind the fence” access. This enabled the children to explore some of the thousands of decorations, lights, trees and wooden structures that make up the 30-year-old San Jose tradition in Plaza de Cesar Chavez Park.

As the children prepared to say goodbye and “Happy Holidays” to their hosts, Loreley, age 4, was hoping to have time to re-visit the Caribbean Christmas exhibit. Of all the tactile experience in the tour, her favorite part was strumming the guitar strings.

“They really need concrete experiences,” said Chandler Tripp School teacher Ginger Brown. “Ninety percent of learning is visual, and they don't have that.”

For more on the children's visit, and to see photos of the event, click here.

CyberSummit: Managing digital reputations

The third annual CyberCitizenship Summit in December brought together educators and nationally known child safety experts to tackle worrisome online issues involving students - especially, how to manage digital reputations.

Teens may surpass their adult counterparts in technological know-how, but their limited life experiences and youth don't always support thoughtful online interaction with their peers.

The CyberCitizenship Summit, held on the Yahoo! campus in Sunnyvale, was sponsored by Yahoo! and Technology for Learning Partnership, a four-county, state-funded regional organization dedicated to helping educators integrate technology effectively into teaching and learning. The Partnership is headquartered at the Santa Clara County Office of Education.

Safety experts encouraged educators to recognize how much they can help students create and maintain positive images on the Internet as they prepare for college admissions, scholarships, internships and employment. Read more.

"Inclusive Story Times"

The San José Public Library has begun a program called "Inclusive Story Times," which employs strategies to engage children of
varying abilities and learning styles. Children of all backgrounds and abilities can participate, in the belief that each child is a valuable member of the community and that learning together fosters appreciation and respect for differences.

“Inclusive Story Times” will be offered at all San José library locations starting this month. For details, visit the “Story Times” section of the Kids pages at www.sjlibrary.org, call your neighborhood branch library or King Library Youth Services at (408) 808-2183.

The inspiration for “Inclusive Story Times” arose from an experiment by two San José branch librarians. Over the course of a year, they conducted story times specifically for children with autism and other disabilities.

This program is the result of an effort by the Library and the Inclusion Collaborative, based at the Santa Clara County Office of Education.

Since 1852, the Santa Clara County Office of Education has provided vital services and resources to the county's 31 K-12 public school districts and more than 250,000 students. The SCCOE strives to provide: advocacy and leadership on education issues, student programs that are models of excellence, and indispensable services to schools and community partners. The SCCOE takes pride in being a premier employer and a champion for children, schools, and community.
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