

Elementary, My Dears: Silver linings

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San Mateo County Times

Posted: 04/25/2010 08:10:20 PM PDT

Updated: 04/25/2010 08:10:21 PM PDT

I've written recently about the many dark clouds looming over Bay Area schools as well as the nation's educational system, from budget cuts and pink slips to the threat of merit pay.

But every cloud has a silver lining, and today I'm happy to relay some of the brighter sides of education by showcasing local students and events.

Helping math stars

San Mateo Park Elementary is a math and science magnet school. Thirteen of its students have been invited to the National Math Bee on May 7 in Indianapolis.

The event uses an electronic, baseball-themed math game called "Batter Up" in which students compete through online math tournaments. Our local mathematicians will be given a chance to compete in person with students from all 50 states.

Park School is trying to raise \$7,000 for the 13 students and three staff members to attend the event. For more information, e-mail sjeruchim@smfc.k12.ca.us.

Natural quest

The Environmental Volunteers, a Peninsula nonprofit, promotes responsibility for the environment through hands-on education. Each year, its programs help teachers meet state science standards for more than 12,000 elementary school children.

On May 2, Environmental Volunteers will host "Wild Quest," a scavenger hunt that challenges participants to decode eco-puzzles at the

Palo Alto Baylands nature preserve. Small teams will compete for prizes while helping raise funds for the volunteers.

The hunt will be followed by food and wine, a raffle, an auction and prizes. For more information or to buy tickets, go to www.evols.org.

Saving music programs

The Redwood City Educational Foundation is a nonprofit group that's been raising money for schools for 25 years. It helps fund art, music, technology, pre-algebra instruction, wellness and outdoor education. This year its biggest concern is saving the instrumental music program in grades five through eight.

The foundation is hosting a dinner fundraiser April 30 called "Benefit for a Brighter Future" at the Pacific Shores Center in Redwood City. For tickets, go to www.rcef.org/brighterfuture. There will also be a benefit concert May 29 at Carrington Hall at Sequoia High School. For information, go to www.rcef.org/groovin/index.html

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During these trying times, we can still have fun while taking action. Let's support our math wizards in San Mateo, enjoy a scavenger hunt in Palo Alto and support music programs Redwood City.

But don't stop there. Contact your state and federal representatives and tell them about the importance of education.

Contact Margaret Lavin at elementarydays@gmail.com.

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