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A physics experiment from last year's event (Courtesy San Diego Festival of Science and Engineering)

Science festival features East County youth events

KC Stanfield

The San Diego Festival of Science and Engineering will be in full swing this March with a series of events designed to get youth of all ages excited about science, technology, engineering and math (also known by the acronym — STEM). This is the seventh year for the festival. Last year, more than 60,000 people attended the events that preceded EXPO day, which is the grand finale of the festival at Petco Park. According to Sara Pagano, the managing director of the San Diego Festival of Science and Engineering, most of the events are free in order to be as inclusive to all families.

“Our festival is a catalyst to transfer that knowledge and collaboration to show students and their parents how science trans-



(Courtesy San Diego Festival of Science and Engineering)

lates into careers and further fuels our economy in San Diego County,” Pagano said in a press release. “Our commitment to helping kids pursue degree programs in STEM fields is evident through our new STEM College

Connections Fair this year. Science is truly all around us and is a foundation of what we do, experience and use every day.”

Though none of the events are

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City approves new plan for Collier Park

Jeremy Ogul
Editor

Three times a week, Anita Bookhart brings her five-year-old daughter to play at Collier Park on Palm Avenue. Bookhart has fond memories of her own childhood experiences at the park. Sometimes, though, it just doesn't feel safe.



Collier Park (Photo by Jeremy Ogul)

“Sometimes it'll be a certain crowd down here and I won't even come,” she said.

Bookhart, who lives just up the hill, said she has occasionally witnessed people drinking, doing drugs or engaging in other illegal behavior.

“It's not a comfortable feeling, especially when you have your child and want them to be able to run around,” she said.

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Poetry of motion Pilates training fosters enduring health

B.J. Coleman

The one sure thing that can be said about aging is that it beats the alternative. But can human bodies remain fit and healthy, even as their bones and muscles grow older across the years?

Cathleen Frank answers with a hearty yes. Frank is a longtime Pilates instructor based in La Mesa. She herself is testimonial to that affirmation. She admits to a calendar-years age of 57, and she is as trim and healthy as an adult decades younger. She brings her extensive experience and exercise training to what

she terms the “forgotten niche” of seniors at The Pilates Club, which hosts regular classes at 8241 La Mesa Blvd.

“Things must be done very differently with older joints and older bodies,” Frank explains. Frank cites, as an example, the real reasons why elderly persons are liable to fall. They fail to maintain consistent movement, becoming habituated to inactivity, and they increase in size as they gain weight, which makes their bodies even more difficult to move. Fat replaces muscle. Moreover, seniors also lose practice in proprioception, the mental sense of one's body in relation to environmental surroundings. All of that translates



Cathleen Frank, wearing a violet shirt, leads a Pilates class at her La Mesa studio. (Photo by B.J. Coleman)

into further negative effects on balance, flexibility, strength and physical capabilities.

The various exercise forms of Pilates are based on smooth-flowing movements, gradual transitions between body posi-

tions and slow building of strength and range of motion. According to Frank, though, conventional Pilates exercises are too harsh for those advanc-

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in La Mesa, there are several planned in the East County area.

SDSU Science & Engineering Sampler

This free event at San Diego State's College of Science and College of Engineering has exhibits for kids ages 5 - 18 and their families. Some of the exhibits include planetarium showings and laser demonstrations

"There's scientific industrial lasers, but it's not like a show where you walk into lab and see how they're using research," said Eric Ackerman. "They're visual. There's a lot of mirrors and they bounce around."

There are also plans to make ice cream with liquid nitrogen (which is perfectly safe to eat). But the goal is purely scientific. Balloons and flowers will also be frozen to demonstrate the effects of super freezing.

"I think every parent loves watching their kids engage in those science and engineering stuff, so yeah, the parents love it," Ackerman said.

The event will take place on March 14 from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. For more information about the exact events at SDSU and their locations, visit sci.sdsu.edu/sampler.

Girls' Day Out: Middle School Edition

This meeting will also be held at SDSU. Students and parents will be split up into different workshops. Student workshops will have hands-on activities like coding a game, civil and structural engineering, 3D modeling and chemistry. Parents will learn about scholarship opportunities and STEM programs in San Diego.

"The way the field has grown in the past 10 or 20 years has been dominated by men," said Pagano. "I think that as we continue to grow as an industry and we have more women to showcase the amazing jobs that they do and get their word out there."

Registration is first come, first served and costs \$5 per student with a signed parent permission form beforehand. The event is recommended for middle school age students and takes place on March 15 from 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Ms. Smarty-Plants field trip

This free field trip recommended for elementary students and their teachers educates chil-



An experiment at the 2014 festival (Courtesy San Diego Festival of Science and Engineering)

dren on the journey of the water cycle from the Colorado River to their faucets.

"The lesson focuses on water conservation, and we introduce really interesting concepts using magic, music, fun, the kids engage in critical thinking, and there's such a good tie-in with nature and the skills needed for science and engineering," said Jillian Quint, the education specialist for Ms. Smarty-Plants.

Ms. Smarty-Plants, dressed in

a colorful outfit that goes along with what she's teaching, will use magic tricks and songs for the children's enjoyment. Each student will also take home a drought-resistant plant in a recycled pot.

They'll even learn a song in American Sign Language about changing the world with our own hands that goes along with Ms. Smarty-Plants' rap. Quint says this helps spread the message to those who can't hear.

The field trip will take place March 18 and 19 from 9:30 - 11 a.m. at the Water Conservation Garden in El Cajon.

A-STEM Day

Another free event recommended for middle school students and their families, this event at the San Diego Air & Space Museum at Gillespie Field will feature aerospace experts speaking about aerodynamics, aerospace materials, propulsion, space operations and aerospace careers. Students will have the opportunity to get an up-close look at real aircraft and equipment. Air Group One is putting together the event hoping to educate the potential aerospace engineers.

"What we're trying to do is encourage the kids to think about making sure they get good grades, so when they get to high school, they can qualify for college," said Air Group One Executive Officer John Telles. "We'll engage them in conversation and see if we can spark some imagination."

The day will take place at the San Diego Air & Space Museum at Gillespie Field on March 19 from 8:45 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

"There's nothing like getting out of class," Telles said. "Think

back when you were a kid. Any kind of a field trip or something is always a lot more fun than staring at four walls. When they come to the annex, of course, it's jam packed with, both outdoors and indoors, as a museum full of aircraft eye candy."

Expo Day at Petco Park

The weeklong festival culminates in this huge, free event that brings together over 130 businesses and organizations to present interactive, hands-on activities that show off the wonders of science, technology, engineering and math. Last year's Expo Day drew an estimated 24,000 children, parents and friends.

Visit LoveSTEMsd.org for a detailed description of the 40 festival events planned throughout the county. The list of hosts for other events includes the Taylor Guitars factory, the San Diego River Park Foundation, the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center, Birch Aquarium, the Escondido Police Department and more.

—KC Stanfield is an intern with the San Diego Community News Network.■



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