



# EnviRetreat 2007: A Special Day of Learning

By Aaron J. Walker, MEEC Program Specialist

Ten MEEC teachers were invited to “EnviRetreat 2007”, a special day of EE learning in Dana Point that had us all traveling from the Victor and Antelope Valleys to take part in this unique all day program.



Teachers Warren Rabe and Barbara Jacobs get a closer look at some of the native birds during EnviRetreat 2007 in Dana Point.

Our day started at the Laguna Cliffs Marriot, where we heard the latest on the development of the Environmental Education Initiative curriculum from Crystal Harden, consultant with the California Department of Education. Crystal shared copies of the sample curriculum, then answered questions from the cross section of teachers represented at EnviRetreat.

Then it was off to set sail on the Ocean Institute's Floating Lab with our “skipper” Tim Sullivan. While on board, we got to sail right up to indigenous and migrating birds which make Dana Point their home for at least part of every year.

Next up was dredging the sea bottom to discover the different kinds of organisms and sea life that form part of this very important eco-system. We found out sea bottom has a distinct smell but no one was anxious to taste it!

After we docked, Linda Blanchard, Laboratory Director for the Ocean Institute, gave us a hands on lesson on how to dissect squid, and how to use marine dissection in the classroom for all grades. We also got to see how the Ocean Institute uses their facility to teach about marine



Linda Blanchard, Laboratory Director for the Ocean Institute, discusses one of the water desalination experiments that students perform while on field trips to the Institute.

life and the environment, as local school students on field trips used the classrooms during our visit.

The teachers asked many questions, and received field tested curriculum to use back in their classrooms.

The day culminated in a great meal at a local eatery, as we were able to share our experiences and highlights from the trip.

EnviRetreat was held in conjunction with the 2007 California Desert Air Working Group conference sponsored by the Mojave Desert AQMD. All proceeds from the CDAWG conference were donated to MEEC, which sponsored EnviRetreat.

Teachers who attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual EnviRetreat were: Adriana Gonzalez, Student Teacher, Victor Valley Community College; Thomas Hainley, Academy for Academic Excellence, Apple Valley; Wendi Rodriguez, Heritage School, Phelan; Mary O'Connell, Eastside High School, Lancaster; Dian Hare, Barstow Intermediate School, Barstow; Barbara Jacobs, Hesperia Junior High School, Hesperia; Kristie Grubb, Bailey Elementary School, Edwards AFB; Keleen Wrighten, New Vista Middle School, Lancaster; Warren Rabe, Shadow Hills Intermediate, Palmdale; and Lorrie Denson, Brentwood Elementary, Victorville.

# Annual Salute to Youth Conference Helping Promote Environmental Careers

**M**ore than 5,000 high school students from Antelope Valley school districts came out to hear, see and learn about a variety of careers for both the college and non-college bound student during the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Salute to Youth conference held in September.

More than 100 hundred representatives from a variety of businesses and organizations were on hand to share career tips, education, information and guidance with the upcoming seniors as they begin to make important college and career choices.



Environmental staff from Lockheed Martin Aeronautics / Palmdale play an environmental career game with students during the Annual Salute to Youth Conference.

Several booths joined MEEC in promoting careers in Environmental Science, Management and Education. Representatives from Lockheed Martin Aeronautics/Palmdale, and Edwards Air Force Base also shared information with students to help them consider the growing field of environmental careers.

MEEC's Salute to Youth booth drew attention to environmental careers with a "Career Wheel," which helped students match environmental career titles with job responsibilities.



The majority of students walked away with even more to consider after seeing the varied opportunities they were previously unaware of in the environmental field.

Aaron Walker, MEEC Program Specialist, explains the "Career Wheel", helping students match environmental career titles with job responsibilities.

## Three Antelope Valley Teachers Win AIRE Awards

**T**hree Antelope Valley MEEC member teachers were honored with the 2007 - 2008 Wm. "Pete" Knight AIRE (Achievement In Reducing Emissions) Award in September by the Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District in Lancaster.



Kristie Grubb (left), Mary O'Connell and Keleen Wrihten pose with Mrs. Gail Knight following the AIRE awards ceremony at the Antelope Valley AQMD in Lancaster.

Kristie Grubb of Bailey Elementary School at Edwards AFB, Mary O'Connell of Eastside High School in Lancaster and Keleen Wrihten of New Vista Middle School in Lancaster were each honored for their pivotal roles in expanding environmental education in the region, particularly as it relates to air quality. Additionally, the three educators were recognized for their active roles on the Antelope Valley MEEC Advisory Council, which charts the course of MEEC activities in the region.

The AIRE Awards are presented each year by the local air district in conjunction with National Pollution Prevention Week. The AVAQMD is a longtime major sponsor of MEEC.

Bret Banks, Operations Manager for the AVAQMD, said he was very happy that three teachers from his area were recognized.

"By recognizing individuals and organizations that go the extra mile to protect the environment, the AVAQMD hopes to inspire others to follow their lead in implementing creative and effective ways of reducing air pollution," said Banks.

# New MEEC Website Up & Running!!!

**M**EEC has been working busily behind the scenes to bring a new, fresh, updated look to [www.meeconline.com](http://www.meeconline.com) and the results are now online!

The new, streamlined site makes it easier to find the information you need - when you need it.

By taking a few minutes to fill out an easy, on-line registration form, you will have exclusive access to content only available to registered MEEC members. By completing the short and completely private registration, you will be able to tap into a wealth of resources for your classroom and your students. Please remember that MEEC will never, ever share, sell, or otherwise make available your registration information to anyone. Your information is only used within MEEC to share information with you that promotes environmental education within our boundaries.

In addition to the overall visual redesign, several new features have been incorporated to make the site more user friendly and a greater resource to teachers, students, our partners and visitors seeking to learn about environmental education opportunities available throughout the High Desert.

Other new website features now include:

- MEEC's Speaker/Mentor Bureau, which is directly accessible from the site for teachers to find volunteers to speak on environmental career topics in their classroom, while high school seniors can find mentors/resources for their environmental Senior Projects.
- MEEC's newsletters are now accessible online.
- MEEC's Environmental Resource Library is available 24/7 to view and request materials on-line both from the Victorville center, as well as the upcoming Resource Library at the Antelope Valley AQMD.
- Viewers will be able to see picture galleries of all MEEC events, no matter where they happen.
- There are new links to exciting environmental sites containing research and teaching materials.



# TEACHER FEATURE **Introducing Mary O'Connell**



"Mary is the kind of teacher that turns kids onto science, and our test scores prove it," Eastside High School Principal Tom O'Grady said of Mary.

Mary has been teaching high school biology – which includes a strong ecology component – at Eastside High School in Lancaster for eight years. She spearheaded the placement of an AP Environmental Science course into the curriculum for the AVUHSD, which is now offered at several school sites throughout the district.

Mary also developed an Environmental Career Pathway at Eastside High School, the first of its kind in this region. The Pathway will help prepare local students for careers in environmental fields, and be a focal point for helping her students prepare for the future.

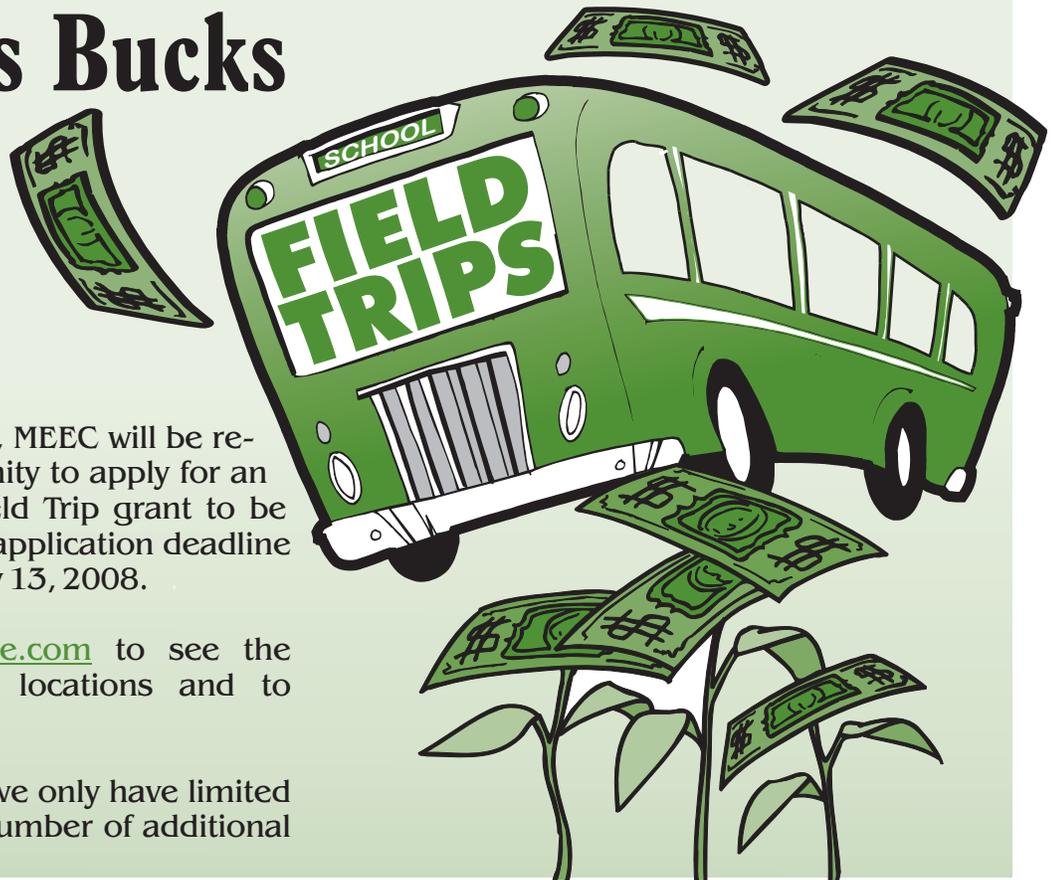
Last April, MEEC honored Mary O'Connell with the "Teacher of the Year" award at the Spring Valley Lake Country Club, becoming the first Antelope Valley educator to receive the prestigious award.

## Enviro Bus Bucks Field Trip Grants Reopened

For a very limited time, MEEC will be re-opening the opportunity to apply for an Enviro Bus Bucks Field Trip grant to be used this school year. The application deadline will be Wednesday, February 13, 2008.

Log onto [www.meeconline.com](http://www.meeconline.com) to see the revised list of field trip locations and to download the application.

Remember to apply early; we only have limited extra funding for a small number of additional trips.



# Sludge Eating Microbes

## How COOL is That?

### Classroom Presentation Opportunity

The Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority (VWRA) is offering classroom presentations that describe the wastewater treatment process, how recycled water is used in the community and the important role that microbes play in cleaning the wastewater. The presentation, which lasts about 30 minutes, is offered to 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes.

During the presentation students will see an action-packed video showing real microscopic bugs doing what they do best – digesting bacteria and other wastes during the wastewater treatment process. After the presentation, the interactive

discussion with students includes visual props guaranteed to stimulate lots of questions and giggles. Each student will also receive a goody bag filled with fun and educational reminders of the lessons they learned in the presentation, which helps meet science content standards.

To sign up for a 2007 – 2008 school year presentation, please contact Linda Ellsworth at (760) 948-9849 or [ellsworth@vwra.com](mailto:ellsworth@vwra.com). You can also sign up at [www.vwra.com](http://www.vwra.com) (see the recycled water pages, then click “school education”).

## Middle School Educator Attends CSI

Middle School Social Studies teacher Warren Rabe was selected to attend the CSI: Climate Status Investigations Middle School Institute at the Keystone Center in Keystone, Colorado from October 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007.



Warren Rabe

Sponsored by MEEC sponsor Lockheed Martin Aeronautics/Palmdale, Rabe was able to attend the four day Institute and learn important facts and ideas to share with his students and fellow teachers at Shadow Hills Intermediate School in Palmdale.

“I learned a lot about the issue of global warming from more than just the scientific perspective,” said Rabe in describing his recent trip.

Rabe was selected to attend based partly on his past successful involvement with the Keystone Institute.

Rabe, was one of the four MEEC teachers, selected to attend the “Key Issues” Summer Institute also held at the Keystone Center in 2006.

Rabe spent a very intensive weekend with about 30 other educators from around the country as they focused on the issues of climate change and the issues surrounding this very timely topic.

“It was great being the only Social Studies teacher present,” said Rabe. “In addition to learning about the topic, I was able to share a different viewpoint with the other participants.”

Part of the requirement for attendance was a letter from Rabe's principal committing to allow the information learned to be put to use back at Shadow Hills Intermediate, in order to start a dialogue on the issues surrounding the sometimes controversial topic.

Rabe said there were many lively discussions during the weekend but all were informative and helped crystallize many of the issues for the participants.

# C O R D I N A T O R ' S C O R N E R



**Aaron Walker**

**E**arlier in this issue of the MEEC newsletter, I shared about the redesign of the MEEC website and the many new features that are now available. I am really excited about the new look and feel for the premier environmental education site, and look forward to your

positive feedback when you all get to see and use the new site.

I know you will find the new registration process a time-saver. After registration you will have access to exclusive contents and options not offered to the general visitor.

By signing up with MEEC online, you will have access to a wealth of information but, most importantly, you will be doing your part to help our environment by keeping things as paper-free as possible.

We are currently looking into ways to keep as many alerts, informational messages and mailings as electronic and paperless as possible. The primary benefit is being able to reduce our environmental "footprint" and conserve resources. That's why I am urging everyone to sign up on the new site.

MEEC enrollment is open to all: teachers, students, our sponsoring partners and community supporters. There will be something there for everyone.

I want to assure you the information you share when you sign up will be essentially the same as the paper-based sign up which we use now. And, just as with our current membership, MEEC will never share your information with anyone for any purpose. Our teachers and other members are our partners, and we treat you all with the utmost respect. Therefore, your privacy is just as important to us as our own.

Now that the new website becomes official, I invite you to browse the new site and see for yourself how much of an improvement it actually is and how much easier it is to use and incorporate the information you find on our site into your daily classroom activities.

*Aaron*

## SCE Employees Show Support for MEEC

Southern California Edison's Nancy Jackson, left, presents Eldon Heaston, Executive Director of the MDAQMD – MEEC's lead agency – with a donation from SCE employees at the MDAQMD office in Victorville.

As one of MEEC's long standing sponsors, SCE offered their employees an opportunity to also be direct contributors to MEEC's mission through a special employee contribution campaign which raised more than \$1,400 in collective and individual contributions.



# SBCO Fire Department/MEEC Sponsor Essay Contest

## Student Winners Prove they are "Ready For Anything"



Student winners of the "Ready for Anything" essay contest pose (above) with members of the San Bernardino County Fire Department following an awards ceremony in Adelanto on October 25, 2007.

The essay contest, sponsored by SBCFD and MEEC, awarded a total of 12 prizes for students in grades K – 12<sup>th</sup> throughout the Mojave Desert and Antelope Valley, based on their skills and imagination in writing about how they would prepare for a natural disaster.

The students read from their winning essays before being treated to an exclusive behind the scenes tour of Adelanto Fire Station 322 by Captain David Herrera, firefighter Aaron Aspel and Engineer Kelly Carter. The awards presentation also included a trip through the Fire Safety House and all students and their families even got to ride on a fire engine!

Students present at the awards ceremony were, from left to right (bottom row): Alexa Sers, third place 3 – 5th grade, Marianna Elementary,

Mariyah Bentancourt, third place K -2<sup>nd</sup>, James Sullivan second place, K – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Olivia Sullivan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Row: Isla Sullivan, first place 6 – 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Destiny Bentancourt, 1<sup>st</sup> place 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Victoria Magathan Elementary School, Samantha Rosenberg, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Helendale Elementary School. Also pictured are firefighter Aaron Aspel, Captain David Herrera and Engineer Kelly Carter.

Not pictured but also winners were: Darian Dalton, second place, 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Aliyah McNeil, third place, 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Ashli Herbstreit, first place, 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Trona High School, Logon Bays, second place, 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Trona High School, Carlisle Burch, third place 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade.



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