

Oakland Youth Get Rare Opportunity to See Stars

Space & Science Center Opens Doors to Underserved Oakland Youth

A group of 75 Oakland fifth graders received a special treat on Tuesday, March 11th, when the Chabot Space & Science Center opened up its doors just for them. The Center, normally closed on Tuesdays, offered hands-on workshops in astronomy and earth science as well as a movie in the center's planetarium. It was an uncommon opportunity for the students of Oakland's Lafayette Elementary, Lighthouse Community Charter School, and Think College Now.

OneCalifornia Bank, through

its OneCal Community Connects program and philanthropic arm OneCalifornia Foundation, collaborated with Chabot Space & Science Center to make this event possible. OneCalifornia is the brainchild of philanthropists Tom Steyer and Kat Taylor. The couple provided the capital to achieve their vision of a sustainable full-service bank to stimulate economic development first in Oakland and later throughout California. The Bank opened for business in 2007.

"This field trip is an extension of OneCal's mission: giving

Oaklanders the tools they need to succeed," said Jeffrey Cheung, President of OneCalifornia Bank. "Opportunities such as this are critical to a child's education, and education is the catalyst for economic growth in our community."

In addition to OneCalifornia Bank and Chabot, several other local organizations helped to make this trip possible. Dreyer's Ice Cream's provided bus transportation up Skyline Boulevard. Local favorite, Merritt Bakery, sent lunch for the hungry explorers. Once in-

side Chabot, the students were greeted by Perla Cantu, a Mills College biology major and East Bay College Fund scholarship recipient. As a young Oakland public school student, she experienced a life-changing field trip and wanted to be on hand to inspire this group. She participated alongside the students as they learned scientific principles through fun activities. She spoke to them about career aspirations and the importance of higher education.

Perla's success story and visualizing all of the potential that

education can bring is reaching these children at a critical time. Research has shown that the 5th grade year is a pivotal moment in a child's development — especially for the formation and the evolution of occupational aspirations.

"Our kids are over the moon about this field trip. They've been talking about it for weeks," said Lafayette Elementary School Principal Benjamin Redmond. "We don't often have the funds to make this sort of trip possible, which is why it's such a delight. The students get truly excited about science and now we can do something special to channel that energy and show them a world of possibilities."

A field trip like this one is especially important for children in the Bay Area, where, despite an economy built upon math and science, student achievement in science is poor and many schools face a challenge in delivering science education. A 2007 recent study by researchers from UC Berkeley revealed that 80% of elementary school teachers in the region devote less than an hour to science curriculum per week. Sixteen percent of responding teachers said they spent no time on the subject at all.

"We're committed to seeing that every child has a chance to experience the education that Chabot Space & Science Center has to offer," said Chabot's Executive Director and CEO Alexander Zwissler. "It's a special pleasure to be able to

serve the children of Oakland, a population near and dear to our hearts."

Chabot Space & Science Center is located at 10000 Skyline Blvd. just off Highway 13 in the Oakland hills. For more information, visit www.chabot-space.org.

OneCalifornia Bank is a full-service bank conceived to stimulate economic development first in Oakland, and then California. The bank finances small to medium size businesses and non-profits and provides fair banking services to individuals and families, designed to free customers from predatory lending cycles and fees. www.onecalbank.com

OneCalifornia Foundation engages in charitable and educational activities that primarily support OneCalifornia Bank's community development mission and activities. Included are programs and grants to increase financial literacy, stimulate community development, help eliminate discrimination, encourage affordable housing, and alleviate economic distress. The Foundation provides lending support, investments, and other services for disadvantaged communities and community service organizations in California. For more information, visit www.onecalfoundation.org

The East Bay College Fund helps resilient public high school seniors, under-represented in higher education, go to college and expand their life opportunities. For more information, visit www.eastbaycollegefund.org

Student Field Trip Launches Dreams

A field trip experience while an Oakland Public School elementary student changed Perla Cantu's life. Now a biology major at Mills College on an East Bay College Fund scholarship, Perla keeps her eye on the distance and reaches for the stars. As a member of Mills' cross-country track team, she runs daily in the Oakland hills, past Chabot Space & Science Center, but she'd never been inside until Tuesday, when she assisted in a OneCal Bank sponsored field trip for three classes of 5th graders from Oakland public schools. Participating side by side with students, Perla's engaging presence may help them launch their own college and career aspirations.

"In the Oakland neighborhood where I grew up, museum-going was not the norm. After my mother accompanied my class on a field trip to the Oakland Museum, my family went regularly to see the exhibits. We began learning about California history and being open to things we hadn't

known were available," Perla said. "My mother didn't speak English and no one in my family had been to college. I didn't even know what the word meant until the 8th grade." Though she excelled in school, it was from pressure to be a role model for her younger siblings, not to prepare for higher education.

Perla went to Oakland Public Schools for all her schooling, and remembers a science fair in 3rd grade and a science workshop in high school, but not much more. As a young student, she had heard of the Chabot Observatory, but didn't know how to get there and, with both parents working, it never seemed possible. Her mother had fears about safety, public transit into unfamiliar areas and taking her small children on the bus.

Perla attended Metwest, a high school that her family helped to develop. While there, her principal asked her about her interests and passions. He asked what she wanted to be doing in 10 years, and his questions encouraged her to reach



Perla Cantu

for her dreams. Through project-based learning, she found the way to her science major. As a tutor, she now gives back to high school students and encourages them see the big picture.

Sponsored by OneCal Bank's Community Connects program and Chabot, the field trip was a rare opportunity for students from Oakland's Lafayette Elementary, Lighthouse Community Charter School, and Think College Now. They also saw a movie about building a

cardboard rocket and learned about space exploration in the Beyond Blastoff exhibit. They experienced hands-on activities, such as finding planets in the sky and working with a vacuum chamber. In teams of two or three, students built constructions out of toothpicks and marshmallows. Then each team shook their structure on a quake simulation device to see if the structure held or collapsed. Afterward, they ate the marshmallows.

Perla believes that everything we see and do is science. Our bodies are science. Everything around us is science. At Chabot, she had her questions ready for the students: "What are your interests? What gets you excited? What makes you happy?" Maybe these questions will help the next generation see their way into their own bright futures.

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