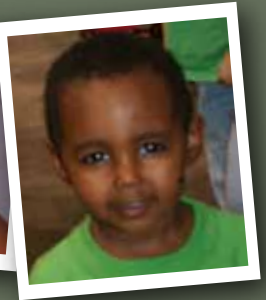
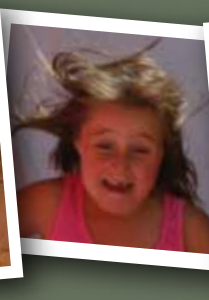


# NCS D

## News Zone



VOLUME VI

ISSUE II

Sept. 22, 2010

## CY OPENS IN NEW HIGH-TECH SCHOOL

By Jenni Luckett

If students are looking for relevance in their school work, CY has it.

CY Middle School opened this fall in its brand new facility.

The school, which continues to serve students in sixth through ninth grades this year, is still offering a middle school curriculum based on core teams plus exploratory options. The new facility, however, is providing an opportunity to take that model to a whole new level.

CY features "houses" for each grade level. There are two sixth-grade houses, two seventh-grade houses, and two eighth-grade houses. (Ninth-

grade students currently are spread throughout the school, and ninth-grade is not expected to be offered next year.)

Each house provides students a chance to stay in a small learning community for their core subjects, and for teachers to collaborate with one another.

Each house also features an exploratory lab. Though students from any grade level may come into another house for the exploratory, having the lab centered in the houses provides more connection to core subjects.



"It's just as important to find out what you're not interested in as to find out what you are interested in," said Principal Dean Braughton.

The labs are among the most high-tech in the region, he said.

"We're told by our suppliers that we are the most well-equipped middle school in the U.S. for exploratories," he said.

Other features at CY

include wind and solar power, along with an interpretive center to come; a high-tech camera system for monitoring safety and security; Promethean boards and FM units in every classroom; and a media system that will allow for school-wide multimedia broadcasts throughout the school.

To see more of the school, check out page 8.

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# Communication is key in organizations

“Monday’s professional development is canceled.”

“Professional development is canceled.”

“The district doesn’t do professional development anymore.”

“The district is cutting its budget.”

“The district is going to start laying off teachers!”

Don’t panic. None of these statements are true! They are, however, an example of the classic game “telephone,” which illustrates how a simple message can change incrementally as passed from one person to the next, altering the meaning and, as in this example, leading to dangerous miscommunication.

One of our district’s values is communication. More specifically, we value “considerate, meaningful communication.” And in doing so, we set ourselves a high goal to reach.

Communication is key in any relationship, be it a marriage, a friendship, a business partnership, or a 2,500-employee organization such as ours. Communication also is one of the most common challenges faced by any organization, particularly larger ones with multiple locations and identities.

*Meaningful, considerate communication must be two-way, and so, we are constantly looking for ways to hear your feedback.*



As an organization devoted to continuous improvement, one of our standard practices is to evaluate our actions, identify our strengths and weaknesses, and make changes as necessary. Recently, we began taking a look at the ways our organization communicates, specifically in terms of communication between central administration and schools or individuals.

We have several tools for communication from central office out: There is this newsletter, issued monthly both in print and online. There’s a district Web site. There are e-mails to individuals, conference folders, Staff Bulletin Board and NewsFlash. There are AlertNow messages and texts. There are letters, flyers, posters, notes on paychecks, and, I’m sure, more.

In fact, there may be too much communication — in an effort to make sure that everyone has the information they need, we

may simply be creating what is known as “noise,” or information overload.

To help solve this problem, we are making a concerted effort to make our e-mail communications to you, as individuals, more considerate and more effective.

E-mails that central office staff once would send to Principals-All at their own convenience now are being funneled through my office, so that principals receive a single weekly communication with the news that they need to know and pass on to their staff members.

Likewise, the Community Relations Office will begin filtering districtwide announcements in a weekly news briefing that will replace constant e-mails to the Staff Bulletin Board, conference folders and local media (because we overload our community, as well as our staff, at times).

*See Duorak, page 3*

# ARCHITECT SELECTION BEGINS FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

The architect selection process for NCSD's high school facilities work is under way. Architects are expected to be selected by Christmas, with design charettes planned for early in the second semester.

This work is part of an ongoing process to transform secondary schools in NCSD. The

district has received design and construction money for Phase I remodels of Kelly Walsh and Natrona County high schools, as well as funding for the design of a new high school campus in Casper.

In late August, the district completed a "scope of work" for the three projects, preliminarily

identifying the number of teachers and students at each campus and the general instructional programming at the sites.

That scope of work will give architects a baseline for bidding the projects.

*See High schools, page 9*

## DVORAK,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Anything that is not of an immediate time-sensitive nature will be sent in a single news briefing each Thursday to the Staff Bulletin Board.

Our hope is that, by filtering some of our e-mailed information more effectively, we can be more considerate of your time. We also hope you will be able to evaluate the communications that have the highest priority, and therefore better access what you need to know. For example, long-term news will be communicated via NewsZone. Announcements about awards, upcoming events, and other less time-sensitive news will come through the weekly e-mails to Staff Bulletin Board or principals. Time sensitive, but non-emergency communications, will come through e-mail as before —

but there will be fewer of them, so you'll know they are important. And, the most critical information will appear via NewsFlashes that automatically pop up on your computer screens.

This is just part of the effort to continuously improve our work toward the value of communication. Our value also says that communication must be meaningful — and that means more than one-way. You, too, have a responsibility in communication. You have a responsibility to seek out the information you need, once you know the tools used to communicate. In an organization this size, e-mail is a key tool to communication — you need to check it to stay informed.

You also have a responsibility to communicate back to central administration. Meaningful, considerate communication must be two-way, and so, we are

constantly looking for ways to hear your feedback. If you have ideas, concerns, or questions you would like to share, whether about communication in our district or about any other topic, I encourage you to speak up. E-mail [NCSD\\_Ideas@natronaschools.org](mailto:NCSD_Ideas@natronaschools.org). Anonymously comment at [www.natronaschools.org/comment.php](http://www.natronaschools.org/comment.php) — but keep in mind we can't tell you how your concerns have been addressed if you're anonymous. Call or write to my office. Participate in the Gallup Employee Surveys (learn more on page 5).

We are a school district devoted to continuous improvement — in our student achievement, our teaching, and our practices and protocols. Thank you for your work to ensure that we keep getting better.

# MEET YOUR ASSOCIATION LEADERS

Meet the leaders of NCSD's classified associations — NCAESS and SEIO — who kindly took a few minutes to share some information about themselves. Watch next month for info from the leaders of NCEA and NCASE.

**Name:**

Beverly Jackson

**Position with association:**

Natrona County Association of Education Support Staff (NCAESS) President

**Position with district:** District Registrar

**Who does your association serve/include:** The employees represented by this contract shall include all full-time and part-time classified personnel in Human Resources, C & I, Business Services and all clerical positions. Also represented are school-based clerical and instructional services and classified employees not represented by other agreements.

**What is the purpose of your association:** The mission of Natrona County Association of Educational Support Staff (NCAESS) is to provide professional growth opportunities, leadership and service for employees in education, and to provide a network for sharing information and ideas.

**How can people get involved/what do you need from members:** Any eligible



employees may contact me at 253-5250; Vice President Melba Blumberg at 253-6000; Secretary Annette Ambrosino at 253-2042; Treasurer Genee Eggleston at 253-5248; or Parliamentarian Jana Shepperson at 261-6161. I send e-mails out regarding meetings and will also have office managers post notices at their schools.

**Contact information:** 253-5250; e-mail [beverlyjackson@bresnan.net](mailto:beverlyjackson@bresnan.net) or [bev\\_jackson@natronaschools.org](mailto:bev_jackson@natronaschools.org)

**One of your favorite fiction books or characters:** My very favorite character of all time is "Santa Clause." If we all believe, we can make a difference in so many ways for so many people.

**Name:**  
Mike Pyska  
**Position with association:**

Service Employees Independent Organization (SEIO) President

**Position with district:** Manager of Food Services, Purchasing and Warehouse

**Who does your association serve/include:** I.T., custodians, food service workers, D.F.O. workers, classified supervisors, bus drivers.



**What is the purpose of your association:** To represent the interests of classified employees in negotiations with the district concerning employee benefits, work conditions and job descriptions. We also keep our members informed of things of importance that affect them that are occurring in the district. The SEIO is represented on the Compact Issues Committee, HR Subcommittee, Board Budget Committee, C&I Subcommittee, Steering Committee, Leadership Group, and Facilities & Technology Subcommittee.

**How can people get involved/what do you need from members:** Employees can become involved by attending monthly meetings, held the second Saturday of the month at 9 a.m. at CSF. E-mails are sent from the secretary to all members and prospective members the week before the meeting. We need feedback from members about things that are happening around the district that are affecting how they perform their job.

**Contact information:** 253-5203 or [Mike\\_Pyska@natronaschools.org](mailto:Mike_Pyska@natronaschools.org)

**One of your favorite fiction books or characters:** Dirk Pitt. I'm a big Clive Cussler fan.

# SURVEYS WILL MEASURE EMPLOYEE, STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

By Jenni Lockett

The Natrona County School District will conduct employee and student engagement surveys starting later this month.

The new surveys, administered through the Gallup Organization, will replace the climate surveys previously administered in the district. The change is, in large part, in response to feedback that the climate surveys were ineffective in collecting accurate information and prompting change. The new survey tool will 1) measure qualities that correlate to staff attendance and productivity and student success, 2) be administered by an independent third party for confidentiality and reliability, and 3) include training for collaborative efforts to address the results.

The employee survey will measure employee engagement through a 12-question (approximately 8-minute) online questionnaire. Each employee will receive an e-mail invitation to take the survey, as well as reminders throughout the survey window, which is Sept. 27 to Oct. 11. The district will receive overall results, and building, department and team leaders with at least five team members will receive more detailed results. No one in the district will be able to associate survey responses with individuals, as all data is collected through Gallup.

The student survey will measure student engagement, wellbeing and hope through a 20-question online form. Students will be invited to take the online survey during a class at their school.

*See Surveys, page 11*

## INSURANCE CHANGEOVER IS IN PROGRESS

Thank you to all employees and retirees who completed their paperwork to enroll in the Wyoming Employee Group Insurance plan, as well as to everyone who helped in the transition process.

On the Aug. 31 enrollment deadline, 93 percent of all insurance-eligible employees had completed the enrollment process.

The state plan will become effective for NCSD employees and retirees on Oct. 1, 2010. The following are some important transition points to note:

\* If you are hospitalized prior to Oct. 1 and your hospital stay extends into October, the NCSD plan will cover your hospitalization. Claims must be filed with CIGNA

under NCSD's health plan #3206692.

\* Your payments toward your current health plan deductible will carry over to the state plan on Oct. 1. For example, if you have met \$500 of your deductible for 2010 under the NCSD plan, you will have met \$500 of your deductible for 2010 on the state plan, as well.

\* Your payments toward your current dental plan deductible will not carry over to the state plan. You will start Oct. 1 with no payments toward your dental deductible for 2010.

\* The state soon will distribute its September newsletter. Be sure to read the newsletter carefully for important insurance information. Remember also that a new plan

year will begin Jan. 1 and changes may take place effective at that time.

\* For more details about the 2011 plan year, employees should plan to attend an informational meeting with the state EGI at 11 a.m. or 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 26, at the Central Services Facility.

\* Beginning Oct. 1, you may have your providers list the Great West-CIGNA medical claims office number as (800) 891-9241. The state of Wyoming eligibility office number is (800) 663-8081.

\* If you need assistance or more information, please contact the NCSD Insurance Office: Arlene Steward, 253-5208; Victoria Nolte, 253-5207; or Monica Sayles, 253-5328.

# Reaching



Summit Elementary School opened Aug. 18 as the school's 25 years. The school was designed with an extreme design; a unique village center; geothermal heating; and a strong focus on leadership, rec

Clockwise from top left: 1) A core team of teachers worked for a year to develop a design that staff visited new playgrounds to see what children were using most and "what your hair go up." Summit's equipment passed the test. 2) Second-grade teachers designed their school colors (green, blue and gold) and mascot (bison), as well as a community, parents and younger siblings were invited to start off the day with a time for parents after they left their kiddos, too. 3) The village center features a gathering at the school. 4) Two painted bison are featured in the school's village center. Each classroom features a theme to give students a "home." The third-grade classroom features soft and child-friendly furniture is placed around the building, particularly on the short couches. 7) Summit was designed to fit into its natural landscape and mimic the natural color tones of the area. The school's heat comes from a geothermal system designed as part of the school. Funding for the project has already been com



# the Summit



the first brand new school community in the Natrona County School District in more than 20 years. The school features a homey, but open, flexible classroom design; opportunities for many educational and environmental “enhancement” features; and a recognition of students’ individual strengths and community partnerships.

*Develop curriculum for Summit and prepare the school with things like playground equipment and furniture. Principal Anne LaPlante visited and interviewed students about their favorite equipment. Her own family member said a playground needs a good slide that “makes a difference.” Her John Foy holds up a sign to gather his students on the first day of school. All Summit students got “I am a LEADER” T-shirts as well as highlights of the school’s Leader In Me program, and most wore their new shirts on the first day of school. In an effort to build relationships with their Summit students, gathering in the village center, then following kids to class for a while. There was coffee, tea and community meals around tables for eating and gathering, a gym-type area, a stage and comfortable step-seating which proved popular for families in the village center, both donated by local businesses. The McMurrays/Jonah Bank donated one bison, while Wells Fargo donated the other. 5) The class is a camp, with pine branches, wooden signs, a tent, sleeping bag and cooler, and lots of cool, outdoorsy personality. 6) Bright, open spaces in the open community spaces between classrooms. Children often can be found curled up reading, doing puzzles, or just hanging out and talking. Huge windows face Casper Mountain. A natural bluff protects outdoor learning areas from wind. Colored bricks on the facade and a geothermal well, but money also is being raised to fund a wind turbine and educational weather and power station that were originally funded and contributed by Chevron, Duke Energy and Rocky Mountain Power.*



*Top: Students work out in the new Fitness Center at CY Middle School. The school has two gymnasiums, two locker rooms for each boys and girls, outdoor playing fields and this fitness center, which features TVs, music and aerobic/cardio machines. It is open to students and staff for workouts. Above: Students filter through lines in the Cyclone Cafe, where they pick up their food before finding a seat in the school commons. Right: Students conduct a science experiment using eggs. Each "house" in the school features traditional classrooms, a science lab and an exploratory lab.*

# NCSF FOLLOWS RECALIBRATION PROCESS

By Jenni Luckett

The Wyoming Legislature has begun its work to recalibrate the funding model for K-12 education in this state. Required by law to recalibrate every five years, the Legislature has assigned the Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration to begin assessing the funding model and build a recommendation for the 2011 legislative session.

K-12 education in Wyoming is funded through a block grant. The funding formula provides a cost-based model to fund key educational components, such as teachers, clerical staff, administration and materials in each district. The balance of the money is then given to districts to use at their own discretion.

The recalibration process involves reviewing the components in the model, adjusting to keep them cost-based and ensuring that the elements in

the formula are adequately funded to meet the state's obligations educationally, to all students.

This year, the process also has involved discussion of an accountability system to help determine if funding is producing results.

"Much of the conversation has been around building a world-class Wyoming accountability system for our public schools," said Superintendent Joel Dvorak, who has been an active participant in the monthly select committee meetings.

"The interest is to build an accountability model that makes sense for Wyoming and that can provide clear targets and good feedback to our legislators as they continue to seek information on what the return is on their investment in K-12 education," he said.

So far, the discussions about accountability have involved

the Wyoming School Boards Association, the Wyoming Education Association, the Wyoming Association of School Administrators, the consultants who helped build the funding model in the last recalibration process, and legislators.

Dvorak said that some of the challenges in an accountability system are to make sure the system uses the right measures, provides timely and accurate feedback, and sets clear targets that ultimately help more Wyoming students succeed. But, he added, he believes that the idea is worthwhile and promising, provided it continues to be a collaborative effort with education leaders and the public.

"It could be a very healthy bit of work for the schools of Wyoming," he said.

You can follow the work of the Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration at <http://legisweb.state.wy.us>.

## HIGH SCHOOLS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Each project has a design team, as stipulated by the Wyoming School Facilities Commission, which funds school capital construction in the state. Each committee includes two SFC representatives, two district representatives and a fifth member

selected by the other four. District reps for the projects are Brad Diller and Donn McCall for Kelly Walsh; Dean Kelly and Audrey Cotherman for Natrona County High School; and Shawna Trujillo and Elizabeth Horsch for the new campus.

The architect select process takes approximately 90 days, so the district hopes to have

architects on board by Christmas for all three projects. The district then will begin hosting design charettes to gather more specific community ideas and feedback on the programming at each site. The goal is to have all projects at the 10 percent design stage by July, so that a request can be submitted to the Legislature in 2012 for funding of Phase II projects.

# Library offers endless possibilities for teachers

By Brenda Thomson  
Natrona County Public Library

Did you know the Natrona County Public Library can be a vital resource for your classroom, no matter what grade level you teach?

As a special incentive to learn about library resources, teachers who sign up for or renew their Teacher Card will receive a free 100th anniversary-edition book bag during September and October (while supplies last).

A Teacher Card allows you to check out up to 60 items for six weeks. Teachers may check out books, movies (one-week checkout), documentaries, audio books and music CDs for classroom use. You can also request items from any Wyoming library and pick them up at NCPL.

To receive your Teacher Card (and free book bag), simply bring identification and proof of address to any library branch.

A few more ways we can assist you and your students this school year:

## Extended hours

Remind your students about NCPL's extended school year hours: Monday through Thursday 10 a.m.-9 p.m., Friday and Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Sunday 1-5 p.m. Librarians are always available to help students

find resources or understand assignment requirements.

## Classroom visits

Librarians can provide literacy-related programs in your classroom, including book talks, read-aloud programs, and activities on a specific theme or research topic.

## Library tours

Tours are available for all age groups and can be tailored to your needs. To schedule, have a few dates/times in mind and call 577-READ ext. 122. Tours last 45-60 minutes.

You may arrange for students to receive library cards during the tour by picking up applications and sending them home to parents two weeks ahead of time. Completed applications should be delivered to the library three to four days in advance of your tour.

## Supplemental materials

Need resources on a specific topic to use in your classroom? Librarians can help select books based on your subject area or activity plans. Call ahead to have the materials ready for you to pick up.

## Book lists for students

Students often need help finding appropriate literature for book reports or other assigned reading. We have lists of award-winning books like the Newbery, Caldecott and Wyoming Youth



Book Awards. You may also send us copies of any recommended reading lists you have for your class, and we will be glad to keep them on hand for your students.

If you assign reading by lexile, NCPL can help students find books in their range.

## Class research projects

Assigning a research project? If your topic is one where all your students will need access to the same resources, call ahead to the library and let us know the subject and assignment timeline. We can set aside relevant materials to be used in the library only for the duration of the project.

## Online resources

NCPL carries high-quality electronic databases for student research. Why not have us teach your students how to use the card catalog, or walk them through the use of a particular database related to your next classroom topic?

To arrange for any of the services described above or to learn more, stop by any NCPL branch or call 577-READ.

## SURVEYS,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

(Details for schools for how to administer the survey will be forthcoming through the Assessment & Research Office.) Gallup conducts the survey nationwide, so results also can be compared to similar sites across the country.

Team leaders and administrators will have an opportunity to participate in training sessions in early November, as results come in, to learn how to collaboratively develop action plans and address the results in a meaningful way. Gallup representatives explained that the items being measured with the survey directly correlate to employee productivity, attendance and safety, as well as students' academic success. Improvements in engagement of both employees and students can, they said, lead to improvements in student achievement.

Dr. Crystal Mueller, associate superintendent of Human Resources, explained that the surveys will provide meaningful data at the district, school and team levels that will help guide existing work on the district's strategic goal No. 4, Safe and Healthy People, as well as the many school-level goals tied to safety and wellbeing of students and staff members.

More details about the surveys will be coming in future issues of Superintendent News, as well as in communications with staff, students and families. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact Crystal Mueller at 253-5231.

# BOOST STUDENT SUCCESS WITH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

*Katrina Lorenzen*

Wellness is an important key to student success, and research shows that students learn better when they are physically active. I am very excited about the response from teachers who want to offer more movement in their classrooms.

Classroom movement equipment has been distributed to many schools. If you are interested in receiving some of the items that were ordered last spring, check it out:

\* The first are some Toss Up Balls (beach balls) for learning. You can use these as a classwide group activity. There are a number of them for e.g., nutrition, geometry, anatomy. Learn more at <http://www.enasco.com/nutrition/?q=Toss%20up%20ball>

\* Next, are some Hot Spots that you can use to get students moving. Just place these around the room, or by their desk, to create a group activity. They range from specific movement, to nutrition, even an animal walk challenge. Also check out balance boards that you can use

in the classroom as a movement "station." Learn more at

[http://www.wolverinesports.com/categories/products.cfm?category=Hot\\_750957&bc2=2](http://www.wolverinesports.com/categories/products.cfm?category=Hot_750957&bc2=2)

\* I have enjoyed providing free giveaways that included stability balls, T-shirts, and pedometers. There are still some Walk to Hawaii T-shirts in youth size small available, as well as water bottles. Also, I do have some pedometers that just need batteries. Please let me know if you are interested in these items.

\* Changes were made to a few of the Student Wellness regulations that include fundraising, parties and after-school events. Please familiarize yourself and communicate with others about the changes.

On the Natrona Schools Web site under C&I>Student Wellness, you will find the policy, fundraising ideas and much more including a brain break Web site.

\* Please submit your Healthy Project Plans if you have not done so already. Do not hesitate to call with any questions: 253-5389.

## **COMPLIANCE TRAINING DUE OCT. 1**

All NCS D employees are required to complete annual trainings to comply with legal requirements. All compliance training must be completed by Friday, Oct. 1, 2010, for the 2010-11 school year.

District employees will need their employee numbers to complete the training. Your employee number is located on the new district ID badge and also on your paycheck stub.

To complete your training, go to [www.natronaschools.org](http://www.natronaschools.org). Click "Employees," then "Compliance Training." Follow the directions to the GCN Trainings Web site. Be sure to take all trainings required of your job group.

If you have questions regarding compliance training, call Mollie DeVore at 253-5327.

## **NCS D EMPLOYEES: GET A FREE FAMILY PORTRAIT**

The Natrona County School District has arranged a free gift for all employees.

Employees are invited to have a family portrait taken by a professional photographer at the Central Services Facility. Your family will receive one free 10"x13" portrait, and you'll have the opportunity to purchase additional poses and copies, if you choose.

Photo sessions are from 4 to 9 p.m. Friday, Sept. 24, and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 25, in the Fairdale Room at the Central Services Facility. Portrait proofs will be available Oct. 12 and 13. (A minimum of 70 sittings are required, or this event will be canceled.)

Bring your family, your pets (with proof of vaccination to get into the CSF building) or just yourself for this free portrait opportunity. Get a free portrait to enjoy, or order even more to share.

To reserve a time, please e-mail [Jenni\\_Luckett@natronaschools.org](mailto:Jenni_Luckett@natronaschools.org) with your name, phone number, the number of people who will be included in your family portrait (note any pets) and your preferred day and time.

*(Please note: This program is free of charge to the district.)*

## **CPR/FIRST AID CLASSES OFFERED**

Many classified positions require CPR/first aid and AED certification. Please refer to your employment contract to determine if you need to take the class. If you are required to take the training, you must register for a class within 30 days of your start date with NCS D.

The three-hour class will certify participants in CPR, first aid and AED. Certification is good

for two years. The class is for both new participants and those seeking recertification. Topics are intermingled throughout the session, so it is not possible to take one segment of the class.

Employees who are required by their contract to take the class will be paid for their class time. The \$5 card fee also will be waived for those required to obtain certification. Coaches are responsible for the card fee.

If you have already taken this training elsewhere, send a photocopy of your certification to Employee Compensation & Occupational Health at the Central Services Facility. NCS D only accepts certification from the American Heart Association, American Red Cross, National Safety Council, and PADA.

Please select from one of the following class times:

- \* 8:30-11:30 a.m. Sept. 28, Westwood Room
- \* 1-4 p.m. Oct. 19, Westwood Room
- \* 8:30-11:30 a.m. Oct 26, Westwood Room
- \* 1-4 p.m. Nov. 16, Westwood Room
- \* 8:30-11:30 a.m. Nov. 30, Westwood Room

To enroll in a class, call Rachel at 253-5228 or e-mail [Rachel\\_Trujillo-myers@natronaschools.org](mailto:Rachel_Trujillo-myers@natronaschools.org).

