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GARDENS NEAR THE CURB
SEE PAGE 3

We have you covered

THE FULL PADS ISSUE

Exchange students uncover cigarette butt pollution

ILEANA NAJARRO

Special to the Daily Press

SM BEACH Chinese exchange students led by Santa Monica High School instructor and scientist Benjamin Kay found a “community ashtray” polluting the boardwalk in Santa Monica.

Twenty-six Chinese middle and high

schoolers participated in the new Splash into Science five-day intensive environmental science program starting Aug. 1 that culminated with group research projects — one of which aimed to count and collect littered cigarette butts around the Santa Monica Pier and boardwalk.

Of the three zones studied, a team of eight middle schoolers found a 1-meter-wide strip

of sand adjacent to the beach boardwalk between the pier and the Casa Del Mar hotel to be a key pollution area, containing five to eight times more butts than the equivalent spatial area of the boardwalk itself.

The Santa Monica Municipal Code prohibits smoking in any public beach or park. Though Kay was relieved that his students found fewer butts closer to the beach, he was

disturbed at the boardwalk results and cited foot-traffic and tourists as a potential cause.

In the residential area around the beach, the multi-unit building at 229 Bicknell Ave. held the residential record of 77 butts, 97 percent of which were found on the street within 1 meter of the curb. Kay speculated

SEE POLLUTION PAGE 9



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KIDS IN MOTION: New Roads students practice dance in the lobby of the new Capshaw-Spielberg Center for Arts and Educational Justice last week. The students are working with nonprofit dance group Contra Tiempo.

Space at New Roads provides collaboration with nonprofit groups

BY AMEERA BUTT

Daily Press Staff Writer

OLYMPIC BLVD Jeanne Meyers’ dream has finally come true.

The co-founder of the My Hero Project, Inc., an online digital storytelling project used in classrooms across the globe, is renting space for her nonprofit at the new Herb Alpert Educational Village at New Roads School on the east end of town.

Not only does she get access to a state-of-the-art theatre with over 340 seats, she’s also able to tap into the creative minds of New Roads students, faculty and other nonprofits located inside the village’s Capshaw-Spielberg Center for Arts and Educational Justice, which opened last November.

My Hero Project works with the New

SEE NEW ROADS PAGE 10



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CLOSER LOOK: A crew works on the fountain at Ken Genser Square in front of City Hall on Tuesday. The park is slated to open in October.

Officials: Fountain’s faults not fatal

BY AMEERA BUTT

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL With just weeks remaining before the opening of two, multi-million-dollar parks in the Civic Center, there’s concern that a significant water feature may not be ready for prime-time.

Where City Hall sees an aesthetic problem, one concerned resident sees a leak and a possible drain on city coffers.

Construction for Tongva Park, a 6-acre site located between Ocean Avenue and Main Street, and the 1-acre Ken Genser Square in front of City Hall started last year.

David Garden, a Santa Monica resident,

said the multi-tiered fountain at Genser Square seems to have leakage problems. He’s been walking by the Civic Center project almost every day for the last year and has watched the construction progress.

In April, he said the water was turned on

SEE PARK PAGE 8

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Photo courtesy Benjamin Kay

YUCK: A cigarette butt research team collects data along the beach boardwalk.

POLLUTION FROM PAGE 1

that ever since passage of the 2012 law prohibiting smoking in newly occupied apartments and condominiums, residents tend to smoke outside on the curb and dispose of their cigarette butts then and there.

One of the study's recommendations called for a discussion with city officials on adding more trash receptacles in residential areas, even along the boardwalk, to reduce the risk of littered butts, especially considering how slowly it takes for them to biodegrade before they get washed out into drains and the ocean during rainfalls.

Adam Radinsky, head of Santa Monica's Consumer Protection Unit, said that if more public receptacles were to be on the table for discussion it would have to be a case for the City Council to deliberate and more studies would have to be conducted before making any conclusions, Radinsky said.

He added that Santa Monica has a history of leading the charge in protecting residents from the dangers of second-hand smoking, evidenced by City Hall being one of the first to enforce the state labor code law against smoking in bars and restaurants in 1998.

Even with a dedication to healthier air and clean streets, Board of Education member Ben Allen — who introduced Kay to Sunny Cheng, founder and owner of Sunny International Exchange Inc., that brought the students to the U.S. — was still dismayed at the small-scale study's results, adding that he felt embarrassed the students had to see how dirty the environmentally-minded Santa Monica could get.

"I don't understand why people who would never throw a piece of paper on the ground would throw a cigarette on the street," Allen said.

Looking ahead, Kay hopes members of his Team Marine program at Samohi that helped with the Splash into Science program will take interest in the results and pursue the study further.

Cheng and Kay plan to offer the summer intensive program again to Chinese students next year, though somewhere down the road Kay would hope to expand its reach to other

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY PEOPLE WHO WOULD NEVER THROW A PIECE OF PAPER ON THE GROUND ON THE STREET WOULD THROW A CIGARETTE ON THE STREET,"

Ben Allen
Board of Education member

countries.

Though international exchange programs have taken place in Santa Monica before, Kay noted this was the first time it was based specifically on exposing youth to the study of environmental science. It was also the first time he had worked with a younger age group.

"I haven't worked much with middle schoolers but I admired their work ethic," Kay said.

Other instructors included Samohi teacher Ingo Gaida and marine scientist and founder of Get Inspired Inc., Nancy Caruso.

Cheng said that through the overall examples set by their instructors, the students were able to form commendable and sustainable habits, such as reduce, reuse and recycle.

"These habits will be passed on to the students' families and friends when they return to China. It is meaningful for their future," Cheng wrote in an e-mail.

Though conversations on starting the Splash into Science program took place less than two months before the students arrived, Kay felt the pilot still set a good bar for future years.

"You can call it beginner's luck," Kay said.

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