

May 23, 2007

To: Members of the Board  
From: Tom Bishop  
Subject: Article of Interest

Attached are the following articles of interest:

- 11.1 *“Torrey Hills students take first in state problem-solving competition”* – Carmel Valley News, May 10, 2007
- 11.2 *“Del Mar Schools Education Foundation presents school district with \$500,000 to help fund 06-07 extraordinary programs”* – Carmel Valley News, May 10, 2007
- 11.3 *“Del Mar Heights Elementary bids adieu to popular longtime ‘musical’ kindergarten teacher Nancy De Angelis Bonnafoux”* – Carmel Valley News, April 26, 2007

11.1 – 11.3

# Torrey Hills students take first in state problem-solving competition<sup>392</sup>

## competition

By Ian S. Port  
Staff Writer

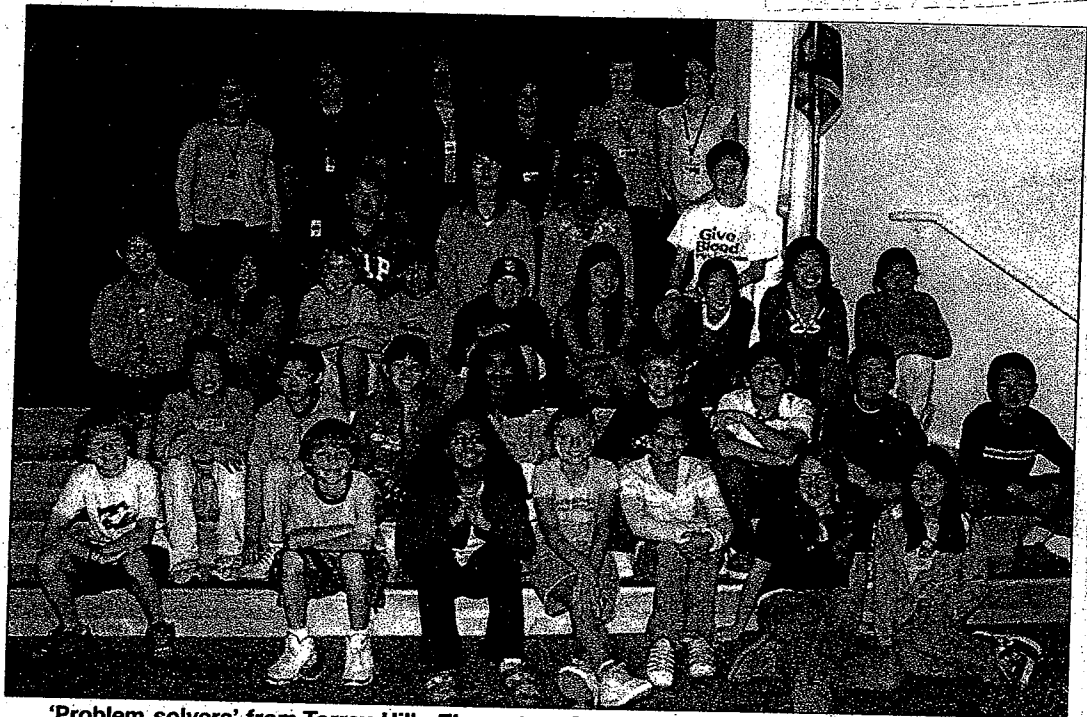
Where is the line between national security and personal privacy? How pervasive is cultural prejudice in our society? What resources will help care for the ballooning number of elderly Americans?

For most adults, these would be tough questions to address, let alone solve. But through the Future Problem Solving competition, fourth through sixth graders at Torrey Hills Elementary School are not only tackling these vital issues, they're devising solutions to them.

And they're doing it well. A team from Torrey Hills took first place in a statewide future problem solving competition April 18, earning them an invitation to compete with students from all over the world in Ft. Collins, Colorado on May 31. Another Torrey Hills team took fourth in the bowl; and a third won a competition to adopt their solutions into skits.

So how are kids in the single-digits learning to solve the world's greatest challenges? By taking them one step at a time. The Future Problem Solving organization teaches competitors to find solutions to diverse problems through six steps that break each larger issue down into component problems, brainstorm ways to solve just one of those, then develop criteria for choosing the best solution. They're allowed to use some potentially inventive solutions like person-assistant robots in their response, but nothing absolutely realistic.

"They come up with five criteria to judge the solutions, then



'Problem solvers' from Torrey Hills Elementary School recently won first place in a statewide future problem solving competition. Photos/Michael Sullivan

they actually apply that criteria to each solution and they rank in order each solution," explains Torrey Hills teacher Ariella Leeder, who coaches the school's problem-solving teams.

After they develop a theoretical solution, students — just like real-world problem solvers — have to wrestle with the nasty details.

"They have to come up with all the details of how they're going to make it happen: Who's going to do it, where are they going to get the funding, how is it going to work, will there be anybody that will resist their idea and how will they overcome the resistance?"

The program was founded in 1974 by Professor E. Paul Torrance to emphasize teaching kids how — rather than what — to think. The competition format itself emphasizes the process of arriving at a practical solution, as students must work cooperatively in groups of four over two hours on a given prompt — time that could otherwise be spent on videogames or playing with friends.

"It's amazing because if you told students to sit down and write for two hours, they wouldn't want to sit down and write for two hours," Leeder says. "But essentially that's what they do."

Leeder competed in the program starting when she was a young student, and says it provides a marvelous opportunity for kids to put their minds up against the biggest problems of their time.

"When I was a kid I felt like, 'I'm dealing with real issues. I'm sitting down at the dinner table talking about what I'm doing at school and these are the same issues that my mom and dad are listening to being discussed on the news,'" Leeder remembers. "I loved that."

Of course, elementary schoolchildren aren't always up to handling the gritty details of issues such as cultural prejudice and

global terrorism (which is why the program includes students through 12th grade). Leeder says finding the balance between giving enough information to help her students find a solution and protecting their childhood innocence is one of the hardest parts of coaching for the competition.

"The biggest challenge is simplifying it for this age range," she says. "One time we had terrorism and security as our topic and that one was a little intense. I just had to make sure that they knew that they were safe at school."

But if her kids aren't quite up to handling the less flattering realities of our world, Leeder says she's constantly impressed by their perceptiveness — and enthusiasm — in learning about it. When she started the program about five years ago, 12 students signed up. This year, Leeder had over 100.

"What you can definitely tell from working with these students is that their parents talk to them so much," Leeder says. "They come in with these amazing questions and I'm always just so impressed by what they know."

And although students usually have to get a teacher recommendation or demonstrate powerful talents to join the program, Leeder says she'll take students who don't always fit the mold.

"I think all students, regardless of where they are academically, can benefit from a program like this, because you're learning a problem-solving process that you can take into any area of your life in the future."



FOUNDATION DONATION — (L-r) Katherine White, Maria Olson, Debra McGinty Poteet, Karen Gilbert, Annette Easton, Janet Lamborghini, Tom Bishop and Steven McDowell.

## Del Mar Schools Education Foundation presents school district with \$500,000 to help fund 06-07 extraordinary programs

The generosity of thousands of families and local companies district-wide has resulted in a gift to the Del Mar Union School District of \$500,000. The Del Mar Schools Education Foundation has grown from a dream to a \$1.2 million per year reality during the 2005/06 school year. Over the past six years the Foundation has raised over \$3 million for the schools. Special thanks go to co-presidents Debra McGinty Poteet and Karen Gilbert for their leadership and contributions over the last year. Additional thanks go to the Foundation board of directors for its hard work and dedication to the students of this district. And, most importantly, huge thanks go to the foundation's donors who contributed more than \$500,000 to the annual parent appeal, and made the foundation's

"gala" at the Belly-Up the most successful in its history. They have proven time and again that the district's children are their top priority, and for that they are thanked.

Foundation board members are gratified that, after reviewing the new operating plan, the school board unanimously endorsed the DMSEF as the primary fundraising vehicle for the district. The endorsement that matters most to the foundation, however, is its donors (parents, corporations, small businesses and community members) because it is their contributions that define the DMSEF's success and ensure a superior education for the district's children.

—SUBMITTED BY DEL MAR SCHOOLS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

# Del Mar Heights Elementary bids adieu to popular longtime 'musical' kindergarten teacher

## Nancy De Angelis Bonnafoux

*Carmel Valley News April 26, 2007*

By Lee Schoenbart

Was it in the stars, or was she one of those unique teens who always knew she wanted to teach?

To the former Nancy De Angelis who has taught in the Del Mar Union School District since 1970, and continued to after she married and changed her name to Bonnafoux 1985, kindergarten was where she always wanted to be.

"When I was in seventh grade I said, 'I want to be a kindergarten teacher,' and can you believe I became one," said the gregarious De Angelis Bonnafoux who is retiring at the end of the current school year.

"I've always loved kids," she said. My horoscope sign is Cancer and Cancers are supposed to be very maternal. It is who I am."

De Angelis Bonnafoux is an original. If ever the term "old school" could be applied beyond generational, music is her means to helping children enjoy kindergarten as she plays the piano or guitar to enhance sounding and counting skills, before or after playtime and during cleanup.

But as she faces retirement, De Angelis Bonnafoux harkens to an earlier time when the world — and the classroom — didn't present such a competitive pace to kids considered toddlers only a year or two earlier.

"Kindergarten should not have changed because a 5 year old is a 5 year old," she emphatically stated. "This is something that we fight for all the time."

But, she said, "It has change in the fact that expectations, now, are far greater for a 5 year old then they were before. Now you're supposed to read and write and do all these things.

"If they can learn their letters and sounds, that's all they really need to do," De Angelis Bonnafoux said. "They need to still play.

"We don't allow children to play a lot anymore," she said. "Everything is programmed. They're programmed to this, they're programmed to that and I really believe that allowing a child to be a child is what we should be doing.

"I think it's a grave injustice to children when we're trying to push them farther than they should be pushed."

And while De Angelis Bonnafoux followed the school district's guidelines, she compensated with song.

"I still love to play the piano in kindergarten," she said proudly. "I'm the only one around. I play songs every morning. We do patriotic songs and I teach them other songs; that's something kids have remembered a lot is the fact that I do music.

"I think the music part is something I've been a little bit remembered for," she said wistfully.



Nancy De Angelis Bonnafoux

### Retirement celebration planned for June 3

A retirement celebration for Nancy De Angelis Bonnafoux will be held on Sunday, June 3, from 1-3 p.m. on the kindergarten playground at Del Mar Heights Elementary School. Past and current students, parents, and community members are encouraged to attend and bring with them photographs, mementos, and cards which can be assembled into a scrapbook for Bonnafoux.

Today, De Angelis Bonnafoux takes heart in the fact that a former student is now a teacher and in the modern era she receives emails from students recalling the songs she learned in kindergarten.

"I had a child email me this past year out of the blue, and it was a very long ago student, and she said I remember always singing the patriotic songs with you," she said. "I guess kids remember things you wouldn't think they did."

Looking back nearly 40 years ago, De Angelis Bonnafoux, who hails from a large Italian family in New Jersey, figured when she graduated from the University of Rhode Island to teach in one of the nation's three surf-and-sun states — Florida, California or Hawaii.

As if describing a kindergarten-style tale a la "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," friends advised her that Florida had too many bugs and not the best school system, Hawaii was too far, but California might be just right.

After a trip to the Golden State during her sophomore summer, De Angelis Bonnafoux decided California was the place to be and rued the day ever since that she didn't buy property in Del Mar 37 years ago.

Outside that one investment faux pas, she could have struck it rich if Indian gaming was all the rage nearly back then because the stars were still aligned in her favor with three different teaching opportunities in three years.

Upon graduating with a major in child development and family relations in June 1968, De Angelis Bonnafoux began her teaching career that September.

"When I graduated, I was offered a job over the phone at the Los Alamitos School District in the Long Beach area and that was my first year of teaching."

Foolishly, she admitted to blowing off the beachside community after her first year in hopes of going to San Francisco, but with no job offers on the horizon she was offered a position in the lackluster, underachieving Paramount School District.

But De Angelis Bonnafoux was determined not to repeat her sophomore mistake.

"So I came and I interviewed, and as fate would have it, in 1970, I was offered a job in Del Mar, and that's where I've been ever since," she said.

Well-wishers and former students can reach De Angelis Bonnafoux through the school district at [nbonnafoux@dmusd.org](mailto:nbonnafoux@dmusd.org).