

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Making learning an adventure

Bernard Gregoris strives to make learning biology a hands-on, fun process for his students

By LYNN SCHNITZER
FOR THE ARGUS-COURIER

Bernard Gregoris began his education career at Tomales High School by teaching agricultural courses and heading the Tomales Chapter of Future Farmers of America.

He moved more into earth sciences and biology as time went on, and now he teaches both biology and advanced biology classes in his newly remodeled classroom. The inspiration to become a teacher came from his early education.

"I probably had good teachers in high school, specifically Don Hendricks and Phil Brown," said Gregoris. "They made learning fun. You didn't realize that you were learning something, but they made sure that you were."

Gregoris tries to do the same thing by making education fun for his students by incorporating outside activities, often with organizations such as the FFA.

"I try to make learning fun every day," he says.

A great way to incorporate outside activities presented itself to Gregoris and fellow teacher Tina Righetti about three years ago when Tomales High School joined with the University of California, Davis and its Bodega Marine Lab to make the CAMEOS, an acronym for Coastal, Atmospheric and Marine Environmental Observing Studies, collaborative learning project available to THS students.

According to the CAMEOS website, the program connects graduate student research and K-



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Bernard Gregoris teaches biology and advanced biology at Tomales High School.

12 science curricula to ocean literacy principles, marine laboratory resources and environmental technology.

"They were looking for local schools to participate," says Gregoris. "Basically, we work with the grad students who come into the classroom. We show them how to teach and at the same time, our students learn how to develop an experiment of their own design, which they present during a seminar at Bodega Marine Lab in March. They get a chance to come up with their own research project with the grad students' assistance, they learn to work as a group and they get a chance to hone their public speaking skills for the presentations in March."

The benefit to the teach-

er, Gregoris notes, is by having grad students come in, "We can step back and see how we can do things differently."

Even for a dedicated teacher like Gregoris, making learning fun can be a challenge.

"Keeping your energy up with the kids is a challenge. We get older but the kids don't," he says.

Away from campus, Gregoris recharges by cycling, and is as intensely dedicated to it as he is to education. He has taken part in the California Alps Death Ride for the last 10 years and counts it as an accomplishment that he completed it this year, especially since he went on a four-week cruise right before the race.

He says the best thing he did for himself was to buy a road bike, saying that it "knocked 20 percent off my time."

Gregoris is a first-generation American. His

AT A GLANCE

Name: Bernard Gregoris

Age: 50

Occupation: High school teacher.

Family: Married to Martha, stepson Elliot.

Education: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

Hometown: Oakdale, but has lived in Petaluma since 1990.

Awards: The Golden Bell for Excellence in Education, awarded by Marin County Office of Education.

Hobbies: Cycling.

Community service: "I support the local food banks."

Last book read: "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo," by Stieg Larsson.

Favorite Petaluma-area hangout: "We like Central Market."

Website: <http://bml.ucdavis.edu/education/cameos/>

mother and father were born and married in France.

Asked to describe himself, Gregoris instead quotes someone who described him by saying, "Still waters run deep." Does that fit him? "Sometimes, I'm in the background," he concedes.

The craziest thing he admits to is, "Sitting on the ledge of Half Dome (in Yosemite Park), when I was in high school."

If there was one thing in the world Gregoris would change, he says, "It would be nice to have all students have the resources and support to help them with their education, and whirled peas (just kidding with the peas)."

(Contact Lynn Schnitzer at argus@arguscourier.com)

OUT&ABOUT

Become a wetlands docent

The Petaluma Wetlands Alliance, a committee of Madrone Audubon Society, conducts a new-docent training course on Thursday mornings Jan. 5 through Feb. 23.

The course consists of wetlands ecology, plants, birds and other wetlands animals, area history, and hands-on techniques with children.

The cost is \$40 for materials and requires a two-year commitment of at least 20 hours per year.

Classes are held at the Petaluma Community Center, 320 N. McDowell Blvd., and/or Shollenberger Park, 1900 S. McDowell Blvd.

For more information, call 763-3577, 763-2934 or visit www.petalumawetlands.org.

PCA's holiday video contest

Petaluma Community Access is asking the community to show off their holiday spirit by participating in the PCA Winter Holiday Video Contest.

"Colorful lights at night and smiling faces gathered for family celebrations are my favorite memories of the holidays season," said PCA executive director John Bertucci. "A series of videos filled with both would be a great gift for our viewers."

Participants should submit videos sharing holiday events, merriment and festivities in the community.

Examples of videos that qualify for the contest include, but are not limited to: Santa's Riverboat Arrival, Petaluma's City of Lights Driving Tour, The Petaluma Festival of Trees and the Holiday Lighted Boat Parade. The contest is open to Sonoma and Marin County residents.

For each holiday video submitted, the contestant's name will be entered in a drawing for a chance to win prizes. Entries will be accepted

until Jan. 20 and the winners announced on Jan. 27.

Participating videographers should visit PCA's website at www.pca.tv/ contests or call 773-3190 for details.

Volunteer tax preparers needed

The American Association of Retired Persons is looking for volunteer tax preparers for the 2011 tax season.

For information on how to volunteer and to register, visit <https://login.aarp.org/online-community/loginform.action>.

Sing with Pacific Empire Chorus

The Pacific Empire Chorus invites interested women to attend the chorus' rehearsal from 7 to 10 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 4 at First Presbyterian Church, 939 B St.

The women's a cappella group meets every Wednesday for rehearsal. Newcomers are welcome.

For information, call (877) 772-0087.

Help Meals on Wheels

Petaluma People Services Center needs volunteers to donate two hours a week to help deliver warm meals to homebound seniors in Petaluma and Penngrove for the Meals on Wheels program.

Call Craig Mason at 765-8484 for information on how to volunteer.

Free boat rides on Sundays

The Petaluma River Heritage Center offers free kayak and rowboat rides from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sundays at the PRHC in Steamer Landing Park.

Visit www.petalumarhc.org for information.

Youth honored; Barletta runs away

(A look back at news and events from previous editions of the Argus-Courier.)

5 years ago

Eight Petaluma children were the center of attention Dec. 9 when the Boys & Girls Clubs honored them as "youth of the year." The overall award went to Evan Girdler, 15, a member of the club for six years who was

singled out for his leadership skills and for serving as a role model for other children. Also honored as "youth of the year" were: Esmerelda Carreño, Jorge Carreño, Tyler Dennison, Samantha Montellanos, Carina Mora and Andrea Trinidad. (Dec. 20, 2006)

10 years ago

Sonoma County Superior Court Judge Cerena Wong ruled that Michael Wegner, 19, will stand trial

LOOKING BACK



for an attempted marijuana theft that left Patrick McLoughlin, 19, dead and a police officer wounded. On Oct. 23, the two teens went to a home on Helen Court to steal marijuana, but were surprised to find a resident, Nick Goursky's, home. The two teens fled and Goursky called police. Officers Patricia Neri and Dan Miller located the two on Filippini Way. McLoughlin, who had a gun, fired several shots at the officers. Neri was hit in the face with a bullet fragment, but survived her injuries. McLoughlin killed himself with the last round. (Dec. 26, 2001)

After learning that the court was planning to put her in jail, Marilyn Barletta, who allegedly stashed some 200 cats in a Petaluma house, ran away before her case was called. On Dec. 20, she was in court

waiting for her arraignment when she heard that deputy District Attorney Mariana Lebedeff was planning to take her into custody. Barletta was out on bail from her May arrest. Superior Court Judge James Bertolli last week issued a \$50,000 warrant for her arrest. At press time. (Dec. 26, 2001)

In a case filled with plenty of twists and turns, Sonoma County Superior Court Judge Elliot Daum dismissed all charges against Louis Pelfini, a Petaluma doctor on trial for murdering his wife, Janet Pelfini. The case began to unravel when an investigator working with Pelfini's lawyer discovered that the forensic pathologist, Thomas Gill, who conducted the autopsy on Janet Pelfini, had a history of alcoholism, firing, demotion and suspension of his license. (Dec. 26, 2001)

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