**Recent Events (March)**

“Watchmen” Winter Decompression continues tradition

*by Leon Liu ’10, ExComm*
*Photos by Ilia Shadrin ’09, ExComm*

The Caltech Y “Watchmen” Decompression 2009 took place at the Winnett Student Center on Saturday, March 14.

A sizable group of volunteers was recruited from the undergrad houses beforehand for the various stations, and each volunteer received, in turn, a Watchmen “happy face” Decompression T-shirt screened by the ExComm. During Decompression, the block-buster, “The Dark Knight,” was shown to a large audience using a projector. Fruits, snacks, drinks and grilled foods were provided as usual to the participants as well. Furthermore, the Make A Difference Day signup table received over twenty signups from the Decompression participants that night. The Decompression lasted through the entire duration of the movie from 7 to almost 10 pm. Most participants

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**George Housner Memorial Celebration**

The Caltech Civil Engineering Department is hosting a memorial gathering to celebrate the life of Braun Professor of Engineering, Emeritus, George W. Housner, 1910-2008, at the Athenaeum on Saturday, April 18, at 1:30 pm. A reception will follow.

Please reply by April 9 to Carolina Oseguera by telephone at (626) 395-4271 or by email to susta@caltech.edu. Spouses and partners are welcome—please indicate number of guests. Mail address: Thomas Laboratory 104-44, Caltech, Pasadena CA 91125

**RISE Report**

*by Alycen Chan, RISE Coordinator*

Rick Bischoff, Caltech’s Director of Admissions, presented a workshop on “Strategies for Applying to College”. This was an eye-opening experience for many of the RISE students. Rick challenged the students to “think outside the box.”

RISE students learned that there are over 3,000 colleges and universities across the United States, and that many small liberal arts colleges graduate just as many, if not more, math and science majors than universities.

Additionally, Rick showed the students how to use a FREE college search tool from the College Board website that helps students find the college matches for their interests. This will no doubt be a useful tool for our RISE students in their quest for college.

This was one of several workshops offered to the RISE students throughout the year.

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**Decompression (continued)**

enjoyed the food and the movie and, hopefully, felt relaxed and ready for their finals afterward.

Thanks to the efforts of the staff (Athena, Greg and Heather), the four people (Veena Chavakula and Michelle Jiang), and all other ExComm and recruited volunteers, **Decompression** was carried out successfully, and it was an enjoyable experience for all.

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**Explore LA Series features the musical “Rent”**

by Elaine To ’10, ExComm

On March 7, the Caltech Y sponsored a trip to see “Rent: The Musical” at the Pantages Theatre, as part of the Explore LA Series. A total of 30 tickets were distributed amongst two faculty members and undergraduate and graduate students. Luckily, enough drivers had volunteered so there was no need for a four-hour round trip on the Gold and Red metro lines this time.

This performance of “Rent” was running for one week only, but it was exceptional in that three of the original cast members from the 1996 production were performing in their respective roles. The rock music was amazing and all of the phone calls from “Mark’s mother” in her singsong voice were humorous. Even for someone unfamiliar with the storyline, the tales of the love between Joanna and Maureen, Angel and Collins, and Roger and Mimi were simultaneously touching and heartfelt. All performers were excellent and, despite being in the back corner of the mezzanine, the view was clear and uninhibited.

Afterward, it was clear that all attendees enjoyed the musical immensely and were grateful for the opportunity to attend.

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**Alternative Spring Break 2009 includes two memorable venues**

**Salinas and San Diego**

The Caltech Y Alternative Spring Break is designed to place Caltech students, faculty and staff in various communities to engage in volunteer service and experiential learning. This year there were two venues:

- **Salinas, CA**
  (March 23-27)

  by Leon Liu ’10, ExComm

  photos by Athena Castro

A group of eight Caltech undergraduates participated in the Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trip to Salinas, California, led by Y Executive Director, Athena Castro, Student Activities Coordinator, Heather Bixby, and ExComm President, Leon Liu. The trip lasted five days, from Monday, March 23rd through Friday, March 27th.

During the first four days, the group stayed and worked at Dorothy’s Place in Salinas, a non-profit organization providing services to the homeless and the poor. At Dorothy’s, the group participated in a range of activities such as cleaning, painting, gardening, tutoring, and serving meals to the community. Between work hours, the students attended talks given by Robert Smith, founder of Dorothy’s Place, Bob Fitch, social activist and former photographer for Martin Luther King Jr., Margarita, director of the @RISK youth gallery, and Dennis Donohue, mayor of Salinas. Through these talks and the students’ conversations with the other workers and “guests” (the homeless and needy) at Dorothy’s, the students, not only learned about the work of the organization and the city, but also heard many touching personal stories and received words of motivation.

Additionally, the students visited the Co-Op, a job-training program for the homeless. With Robert, they also paid a visit to the rural “Labor Camps” in Soledad where they met with children of poor farm workers, some of whom are affected by terminal illnesses. The group spoke with the kids and participated in a fun game of kickball with them. During the last day of work, the group helped packing more than 400 bags of food at the Monterey County Food Bank in the morning, and in the afternoon they helped distribute the bags to more than 600 needy families.

Before they left Dorothy’s after four days, the students left their memories there by decorating a “Caltech ceiling tile”. In their free time, the group visited the National John Steinbeck Center, where they learned about the life and work of the Nobel Laureate as well as the agricultural community in the Salinas Valley.

On the last day of ASB, the group enjoyed a quick tour of San Francisco including the Golden Gate Bridge, Fisherman’s Wharf, Coit Tower, Lombardy St., and riding on the famous trolleys. The group arrived at LA past midnight on Friday after a long drive and a hearty Indian meal on the way. Overall, the trip was a good mix of hard work, education and relaxation. This personal “Immersion”
Alternative Spring Break (continued)

Touring San Francisco experience in the community allowed the students to make a difference as well as acquire new perspectives and become more aware of the issues of hunger and homelessness.

San Diego, CA
(March 25-28)
by Christina Weng ’11, ExComm
A group of 13 students participated in the ABS trip to San Diego, led by Y Student Activities & Community Services Director, Greg Fletcher, and ExComm members, Ilia Shadrin ’09 and Christina Weng ’11.

We arrived in San Diego late Wednesday afternoon. Before it got too dark, we decided to take a jaunt down to the beach, only a block and a half away from our hostel, which is located right in the middle of Ocean Beach, a salty-air town straight from the pages of a storybook. Jamaican steel drums played outside the window, and all along the street were shops and indie cafes. The street was blocked off for the weekly Farmer’s Market where you can buy fresh produce, gorgeous flowers, and homemade crafts.

On Thursday morning, we set off for Tecolote Canyon, where we took part in the Canyon Watch program sponsored by the San Diego Oceans Foundation. There are over 300 miles of sewer lines in the canyons of San Diego. These sewers and manholes can get overloaded or break, spilling millions of gallons of untreated sewage into the ocean and canyons. Only a few years ago, the EPA ranked San Diego in the worst quartile in terms of sewage spills. Thus, the Oceans Foundation works with the public to raise awareness and recruit volunteers to patrol the canyons and monitor the status of manholes and the sewage system. The particular area we hiked was extremely wild and not charted (at times the trail simply disappeared). We did manage to find 16 manholes, one of which we reported as broken. We also collected several full garbage bags of plastic and glass on and off the trail.

Preparing for Tecolote Canyon patrol

We also stumbled upon an unexpected find – golf balls. They were buried in the soil and embedded in the walls of the river. By the end of the day, we’d dug out hundreds and hundreds of golf balls. Lugging the bags back to the car was no small task, but we managed it and now have an impressive collection of golf balls weighing more than many of our volunteers.

Our work on Friday was to clear the nesting grounds of the Least Tern, an endangered bird that comes to the San Diego region every year to raise its young. Terns like to make their nests in sandy areas with very little vegetation. The few plants that do grow must be low-lying in order for terns to easily spot predator birds. Most native plants in the region we were working in are naturally flat, and so we set to work removing non-native vegetation. Often, the weeds grow over or under the native plants, so extracting the invasive vegetation is quite delicate work. In particular, the filigree weed was a great nuisance – the plants have sword-like structures, each of which is a seed. When the seeds fall, they curl up into screw-shaped coils, which allows for easy penetration into the soil. Another weed we removed, the devil’s thorn, has seeds sharp enough to puncture bike tires. Needless to say, there were several scratched hands by the end of the day.

Before we headed back on Saturday, we traveled to Coronado Island, where we helped clean the shoreline and record the debris on the beach. Being spring break season, we were not the only volunteer group there. The cleanup was sponsored by the San Diego Coastkeeper, and we spotted several groups carrying the trademark yellow garbage bag and charts. Our group was fairly large, so we split up and began to comb the beach for non-biodegradable waste. At the end of the cleanup, all the groups had collected 307 lbs of trash. Not bad considering the majority of the waste on the beach was lightweight plastics and cigarettes.

Below is one last picture on Coronado Beach, during which there were many falls, "owws," and snickers from passersby.

Greetings from Coronado Beach!


Coming Events

April Showers – More Great Programs!

by Greg Fletcher, Y Student Activities & Community Services Director

As Spring Term begins, the Y-ExComm, Y-Outdoors, Community Service Coordinators, and Social Activism Speaker Series Committee are still working to make sure that April showers campus with more exciting programs. Coming soon:

• **Pre-Frosh Weekend** (Apr 2-4) – The month starts right off with Pre-Frosh Weekend. The Caltech Y ExComm will be gathering the Pre-Frosh for the annual Pre-Frosh Movie - this year a showing of one of the episodes of "Curious," a documentary that introduces some of Caltech's exciting research to the world. Following the documentary, a question and answer period is scheduled with one of the featured professors, Dr. Michael Dickenson. Of course, the event is also designed to introduce Pre-Frosh to the Y, and an ice cream social will help facilitate some interaction with current ExComm members. Also during Pre-Frosh Weekend, members of the ExComm will be sitting on a panel of students talking about life outside the classroom.

• **Social Activism Speaker Series** (Apr 8) – SASS will continue with a talk in Beckman Institute Auditorium on Wednesday, April 8, at 7:30 pm, by Emily Pilooton, the Founder and Executive Director of Project H Design – a nonprofit that enables product design initiatives for Humanity, Habitats, Health, and Happiness. Amy started Project H in January 2008 to provide a conduit and catalyst for need-based product design that empowers individuals, communities, and economies. Current Project H initiatives include water transport and filtration systems in South Africa and India, educational math toys for a school for AIDS orphans in Uganda, a homeless-run design co-op in LA, and design concepts for foster care education and therapy in Austin. She has written for publications including ID, GOOD and ReadyMade, and is the author of a forthcoming book entitled "Design Revolution: 100 Products that Empower People," which will be published by Metropolis Books in September 2009. It is sure to be a thought provoking and interesting event for all. The event will also lead into May, when we will bring one more SASS event with Jackson Katz - an advocate for ending sexual and gender violence.

• **Make-A-Difference Day** (Apr 11) – April features one of the largest, and perhaps most important, programs of the year in the annual Make A Difference Day. This year, the ExComm and other student leaders have developed over 15 projects with local service agencies including: environmentally focused projects with North East Trees and Heal the Bay; academic enhancement with School on Wheels; visitations at Vista Nova and Villa Esperanza; construction with Boy's & Girl's Club and Rebuilding Together; clean up work at Elizabeth House; and children’s focus with Hillsides Home and Rosemary Children's Services. Staff and Board members will come together to assist in set up, driving, and registration duties at the Y central office.

• **International Week** (Apr 20-24) – This year, International Week is also making its return to April after a brief one-year hiatus in May. The week will feature talks by students focusing on some of the countries of the world represented at Caltech and, of course, the International Food Fair and Culture Show – from 4:30 to 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, in Avery Courtyard. Over 15 student clubs representing a range of cultures and continents will provide samples of foods from around the world. Attendees can sample tastes of Zenzai, Mici, Tourtiere, Ba Bao Fan, Kimbab, and much more. The Food Fair will be followed by a free Culture Show. Talented Caltech students representing a number of countries will perform traditional dances, play exotic instruments, and showcase colorful fashion from around the world.

Of course, there will also be a variety of outdoor treks, social activities, and community service including the continuation of the **RISE Program** to fill in the gaps as well.

Spring Friends Dinner to feature Jean-Lou Chameau

by Jim Workman '57, Y Friends Committee Chair

Please make plans to attend the Spring Friends Dinner on Thursday, May 7. Caltech President Jean-Lou Chameau has graciously agreed to be our speaker. He will address "Caltech and the Current Economic Environment." He and his wife, Carol Carmichael, have repeatedly shown their support for the Caltech Y and their interest in Caltech students and alumni. Prepare yourselves for a delicious Athenaeum dinner and be ready to be charmed and informed by our speaker.
Meet the ExComm
Each month the Caltech Y News interviews a member of the Y Student Executive Committee (ExComm)

by Heather Bixby, Student Activities Coordinator

Meet our new ExComm member, Elaine To. Elaine is a junior studying Biology from North Hollywood, CA. She has kept herself busy from the first time she stepped into a meeting. She has planned and led a variety of ExComm events, ranging from Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Day to Explore LA events such as “Phantom of the Opera” and the Los Angeles Zoo. Currently, she is coordinating the Villa Esperanza site for Make-A-Difference Day.

Along with her ExComm responsibilities, Elaine is also the Undergraduate Researcher at the PHP Lab at Caltech. She is exploring potential therapeutics for Alzheimer’s disease and schizophrenia. Also, just a few days ago, Elaine was told she has been awarded a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF). Congratulations Elaine!

Elaine is excited to be a part of ExComm because she now has the opportunity to “decide on and lead multiple programs and events that bring Caltech students out of their labs.” These events really add to the lives of the students, and she is thrilled to be a part of it. She also values the connections she has made with both the students of ExComm, and the members of the Board of Directors.

Voices of the Y Board

Candace Rypisi
SURF Director and Caltech Y Board Member

When I came to Caltech in 2001 as Director of the Women's Center, I quickly became a fan of the Y!

As a new staff member, the Y provided me an opportunity to meet and interact with students. I attended talks organized by the Social Activism Speaker Series, attended noon concerts and summer BBQs, and even staffed an Alternative Spring Break trip to Ensenada.

In my role at the Women's Center, I also got to work closely with the Y staff and the student ExComm. Together, our offices collaborated on many cultural and educational programs. One of my favorites was a Women's Outdoor Adventure series!

But, it wasn't until I joined the Caltech Y Board in 2005 that I really got to know the Y. As a Board member, I get to interact with a community of students, alumni, faculty, and staff – all dedicated to enhancing student life and making sure that the Y has the resources and support needed in carrying out its mission.

The Y fills an important role at Caltech. It provides students an opportunity to engage in the world outside of Caltech. Through educational programs, cultural events and, most importantly, community service, students are able to "round out" their Caltech education. All of this is so important as they prepare to become the next generation of world leaders. It is both humbling and exciting to be part of such an effort!
### CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Note: See Caltech Y website for additional information and schedule updates

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### The Caltech Y

The Caltech Y is an independent 501c3 organization formally affiliated with the California Institute of Technology.
The Y mission is to enrich student life and challenge students to grow into responsible citizens of the world.

### Contact Information

Phone: (626) 395-6163  
Fax: (626) 395-8890  
Email: caltechy@caltech.edu  
Website: [http://www.caltechy.org](http://www.caltechy.org)

### Location

Caltech  
MC 5-62  
Pasadena, CA 91125  
(West of tennis courts at SW corner Hill & San Pasqual)

### Y Staff

- **Athena Castro** - Executive Director  
- **Greg Fletcher** - Student Activities & Community Service Director  
- **Christopher Kealey** - Marketing & Development Director  
- **Heather Bixby** - Student Activities Coordinator  
- **Carmelita Hearn** - Administrative Assistant

### Board of Directors

#### Executive Committee

- **Carolyn Ash** - Chair  
- **Peter Mason** - Treasurer  
- **Leon Liu** - Student ExComm President  
- **Susan Murakami** - Vice Chair  
- **Connie Kofahl** - Secretary

#### Members (* indicates Student Executive Committee)

- **Richard Beatty**  
- **Abel Bourbois**  
- **Donald Brown**  
- **Pradeep Bugga**  
- **Bill Burrows**  
- **Veena Chavakula**  
- **Bill Burrows**  
- **Shirley Cohen**  
- **Sunny Chun**  
- **Frank Dryden**  
- **Dean Elzinga**  

#### Board Mtg

- Emily Pilloton  
- SASS  

#### ExComm Mtg

- RISE Tutoring  
- Emily Pilloton  

#### RISE Tutoring

- RISE Tutoring  
- RISE Tutoring  

#### International Week RISE Tutoring

- RISE Tutoring  
- RISE Tutoring  

#### International Week Intl Food Fair RISE Tutoring

- RISE Tutoring  
- RISE Tutoring  

#### International Week Caltech Earth Day

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- RISE Tutoring  

### The Caltech Y News

**Editor:** Guinilla Hastrup  

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