Announcements

Caltech Y Alumni Brunch – Open to all!

by Athena Castro, Y Executive Director

As part of the annual Caltech Alumni Reunion Weekend, the Caltech Y is holding an open house and brunch on Sunday, May 18, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm, at the Caltech Y Offices (just north of the Athenaeum on San Pasqual between the Athenaeum tennis courts and Ruddock House) Have you ever attended a Y Hike or Decompression, been part of the Y ExComm, or been involved with any Y activity?

This event is open to all alumni who have fond memories of the Y, want to get updated on Y activities, or want to learn more about the Y. Stop by to enjoy good food and chat with friends.

For more information, please contact the Caltech Y at: caltechy@caltech.edu or 626/395-6163.

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Recent Events (April)

Pre-Frosh Weekend well attended

by Peter Liu '09, ExComm

This year's Caltech Y Pre-Frosh Weekend event was held on Thursday, April 3. Both the Y lounge and multipurpose rooms were completely packed with around 45 pre-frosh students who came to watch an episode of “Curious,” a documentary about Caltech professors and their research, including Mark Davis, a chemical engineering professor at Caltech, who has developed a nanoparticle treatment for cancer.

We were fortunate enough to have Professor Davis attend the event and have a Q&A session with the students after the event. The questions asked by the pre-frosh were very insightful and Professor Davis responded generously.

There was plenty of ice cream for everyone and even the undergrads who came out to see the movie really enjoyed it too.

Spring PALAC Discussion Group event very stimulating

by Norri Sirri, Y Board

The third PALAC Series Discussion Group event, in which members of the Pasadena area Liberal Arts Center participate in discussions led by Caltech students, took place at the Caltech Y on April 16. In addition to the student leaders, there were 12 participants at this event (9 from PALAC, and 3 from the Caltech Y Board).

The main discussion was about a paper by Lili Yang and David Baltimore, from the Caltech lab where Jonathan Tsai works. The subject covered the use of stem cells to fight cancer, in a process called “instructive immunotherapy”. In addition to speaking about that paper, Peter Liu spoke about fighting cancer with nanoparticle medicines from another Caltech lab where he works.

The Yang/Baltimore paper is quite technical, so Jonathan and Peter lectured on its content, which is much more demanding than leading the usual PALAC discussion on material that all the participants have read in advance. Peter and Jonathan prompted a lot of discussion, along with their lecture material, and the evening was very successful.

Based on the success of the three sessions this school year, the Caltech-Y and PALAC plan to continue this series of one-night discussion groups (one each quarter), led by Caltech students, on three different topics of scientific interest selected by the students.
Students engaged at over 15 venues

This year, the ExComm and other student leaders developed over 15 projects with local service agencies. On 12 April, over 200 participated in these projects, which included: environmentally focused projects with Tree People, Santa Monica Trail Coalition, Heal the Bay, and an environmental charter school; academic enhancement at Mark Keppel High and Science Olympiad; visitation at The Terraces, Vista Nova, and Villa Esperanza; construction with Habitat for Humanity, Boy's & Girl's Club, and Rebuilding Together; clean up work at Elizabeth House; and children's focus with Hillsides Home, Rosemary Children's Service, and Five Acres. Y Staff and board members came together to assist in set up, driving, and registration duties at the Y central office. At the end of the day, all were rewarded with a delicious barbecue. Descriptions and photos of examples of the day’s accomplishments are described below:

**Heal the Bay**

*by Christina Weng '11*

This year’s MAD Day was an awesome experience; the sites were student-led and involved the entire Caltech community. As part of the Heal-the-Bay project; I went with about a dozen students to Santa Monica beach to clean up the shoreline.

The storm drain system empties out at Santa Monica pier, and there was an accumulation of waste products and litter around the beach. Though picking up litter is what is most commonly associated with the Heal-the-Bay program, the most important job for the volunteers is to document the types of waste products found. This tally helps push laws forward to ban certain products.

It was a great opportunity for all of us to get together and do our part to take care of a place we all enjoy. This was my first MAD Day, and I look forward to working with the Caltech Y on future MAD Day projects.

**Rosemary Children’s Service**

*by Sunny Chun ’10, ExComm*

A group of seven Caltech undergrads went to a home for girls coming from difficult backgrounds called Rosemary Children’s Service, located east of Caltech in Pasadena. There we introduced ourselves to a group of five girls, and we started our art project, an activity they asked us to organize. On the tables in front of us we spread out some journals, many ribbons, glitter, glue, stickers, markers, and beads. After a while, about 13 other girls trickled in to take part in the activity. The girls ranged in age from 13-17, and all had fun personalizing journals that could be kept for any purpose – keeping pictures, writing stories, and more.

Our student volunteers really appreciated the experience because of the service we were doing for the girls by bringing something new to do at their facility.
Spring Friends Dinner celebrates Earth Day
Environmental advocate Spencer Black is guest speaker
by Tom Mannion, Caltech Asst VP for Student Affairs & Campus Life

The Caltech Y and the Caltech Y Friends Committee hosted their Spring Dinner April 24 in the main dining room of the Athenaeum. This dinner marked our celebration of Earth Day as well as bringing us a very special speaker, Spencer Black. Over 50 students joined approximately 75 other Friends. A great menu was arranged by Betty Sirri, and the tables were decorated with fantastic flowers from Gunilla Hastrup.

Spencer Black is an Assemblyman from Madison Wisconsin. Spencer is also the proud father of Caltech Freshman Tim Black. Representative Black even got to meet some of his past and present constituents. Senior Kevin Watts introduced himself as not only one of Spencer’s constituents; he added the fact that Spencer has been his Assemblyman during his (Kevin’s) entire life. Other Madison natives who Spencer had the chance to meet were Carol Carmichael and Steve Frautschi.

Representative Black spoke about his mentor Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day. His talk then focused on his role as Wisconsin’s leading environmental advocate. Under Spencer’s stewardship, Wisconsin has not only led the nation in responsible legislative action, they have probably seen more shining results from their legislation than any other state. The audience was truly engaged by the topic of environment, science, public policy and politics, and a great question and answer period followed.

The week started with a reception for Spencer and his wife, Pam Fornell. Dozens of students and alums gathered to informally chat while enjoying El Salvadoran food as well as fish caught in the ocean by Caltech students. Friday included a trip to the Audubon Center at Debs Park. The unforeseen excitement of the week happened when we took Spencer and Pam, as well, as a group of alums and students, up to Chantry Flats for a hike to Sturtevant Camp. By the time we came back there was quite a bit of smoke and ash in the air. Greeted by the fire department, we were told we might have to spend the night in order to wait the fire out. Fortunately, we were escorted down in the very first group of five cars. Unfortunately, we were then greeted by the media. After spending a good part of the week talking about carbon and carbon imprints, it was a little ironic to be showered with ash to end the week.

The week was truly a success and we thank all those who were able to join us.
Recent Events (continued)

**Adventure 101 luncheon presentation**

*Two Wheels and the Road to Adventure*

*by Greg Fletcher, Y Student Activities & Community Services Director*

On April 16, between 20 and 30 students gathered for lunch and the second presentation in the new Adventure 101 Series. The talk focused on bicycle trekking and featured stories from Michelle Selvans, from the Y-Outdoors Committee, who has toured numerous venues including a trip down the west coast of the United States, and Greg Fletcher, from the Y staff, who trekked cross country from Niagara Falls, Canada, to Los Angeles. Topics included: supported tours vs. independent treks, day trips to multi-week treks, gear and equipment, packing lists, maintenance and repair, arranging lodgings and meals, selecting routes, and traveling safely.

Attendees were encouraged to consider bike touring as a great adventure option. Others in the audience also shared stories and a few even signed on to help organize Y - Bike Treks for the future. Everyone walked away with the central message well enforced – for relatively low cost, and with relatively little experience and training, a cycling trek can be a safe and easy way to adventure.

**Social Activism Speaker Series events**

*Homeland Security*

*by Rosalyn Sayaman, grad student, SASS Committee Chair*

On April 7, a SASS event was held on the legal fight by a group of Jet Propulsion Laboratory employees against Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD12).

In HSPD12, President Bush directed the Secretary of Commerce to develop a uniform standard of identification for access to federal facilities, including NASA centers. In doing so, the Department of Commerce expanded the directive to include extensive, open-ended background investigations of employees and contractors. Through its contract with Caltech, NASA mandated that the requirements be applied to all JPL employees and on-site contractors, even though 97% were deemed to be low-risk employees doing non-sensitive work. Caltech management developed procedures and decided that any JPL employee who did not comply would be deemed to have "voluntarily resigned."

Unable to resolve concerns with NASA or with Caltech, 28 JPL employees filed a lawsuit on behalf of all concerned employees to stop the process. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued a preliminary injunction halting the background investigations until issues can be resolved in the courts; the government has appealed this ruling.

The issues in this case are complex, including concerns about privacy rights, open scientific inquiry, impact on science funds, and Caltech's role in executing NASA's potentially unconstitutional actions.

JPL scientists and plaintiffs, including senior research scientist Robert Nelson, senior software/systems engineer Susan Paradise, and senior technical writer specialist Susan Foster, discussed the issues surrounding HSPD12's implementation at JPL. Prof. Mary Kenennedy discussed the legal issues involved with this case from her point of view as a scientist, faculty member, and citizen.

"**Occupation 101**"

*by Greg Fletcher, Y Student Activities & Community Services Director*

The Social Activism Speaker Series Committee, never ones to shy from controversy, chose to wade into one of the most heated and challenging issues in the world with an invitation to Abdallah and Sufyan Omeish to discuss and screen their documentary, "Occupation 101," on April 30 in Ramo Auditorium.

The film details Palestinian life under Israeli military rule and discusses some of the major obstacles that stand in the way of a lasting and viable peace in the region from their perspective.

A crowd of over 200 showed up to see the film for themselves and to question and challenge the directors from a variety of perspectives. Dialogue was so passionate that it greatly challenged the moderation of the discussion. But it also continued on for well over an hour following the question and answer period, with many attendees(dialoging together and with the filmmakers, who chose to stay and discuss in the lobby of the auditorium.

The Social Activism Speaker Series has always identified activists to bring to campus to share a perspective, not as an endorsement of the perspective shared, but to challenge the community to explore issues further – agree or disagree – and to engage in the process of creating a better world. Not all believe that such thought provoking issues should be brought to campus, that hearing from one perspective only can result in further inquiry, or that the perspectives shared are not necessarily represented in American media outlets; however, the SASS committee, after significant discussion, chose to move forward putting faith in the community and the discussion, and choosing courageously to act even when under scrutiny. The initial results were passion and dialogue, not necessarily resolution, but who knows from what forum the spark of change will one day come.
Meet the ExComm

Each month the Caltech Y News interviews a member of the Student Executive Committee (ExComm)

by Molly Jones, Y Student Activities Coordinator

Vamsi Chavakula’s plans for the future are ambitious. Once he graduates from Caltech this June, he will begin four rigorous years at Harvard Medical School. He is currently thinking that, upon completion of his medical school class work, he may pursue his PhD in order to be well prepared to work in clinical technology. Whatever path Vamsi does decide to pursue, it is undisputable that he will achieve success.

In addition to his strengths in academics, Vamsi has also demonstrated a willingness to give back to his community. Vamsi participated in Make-A-Difference Day during his freshman year and, with a little persuasion from Rebecca Adler, has been contributing to Y events ever since. He has coordinated a number of outings to Chancellor Place, a local senior home, a freshman orientation trip and Make-A-Difference Day sites. In addition to his work with the Y, Vamsi was the ’07-‘08 Strauss award recipient and has utilized the Strauss’ support to teach weekly science classes at the local Boys & Girls Club. The passion and innocent honesty of the children he has worked with through these classes has made the experience an impressionable one.

Vamsi feels that, “The Y has given me the encouragement and support to do things that I would never have otherwise done.” He credits Athena, the Y’s Executive Director, with giving him the extra push to apply for the Strauss scholarship, an experience which has changed his life. (He would also like to credit Greg for his fabulous fashion guidance that he has passed along to the ExComm by way of his flannel shirts – an inside joke).

Voices of the Y Board

Harry Kawahara
Community Member, Y Board

As a retired professor in counseling and psychology, I am an advocate of the importance of developing the whole person. It excites me to learn of the outreach of our students beyond their academic pursuits such as traveling to Biloxi, Mississippi, to help with the massive rebuilding needs of this devastated area after Hurricane Katrina. Then too, Caltech Y students have gone to Washington, DC, to become aware of governmental processes and advocate for science in higher education. During their recent trip to the nation’s capital, the 20-student delegation met with lobbyists, and visited governmental agencies to learn more about public policy issues, mainly in the area of science. They also met with alumni who hold influential government positions impacting science and learned how important it is to have people in strategic offices to influence policy outcomes.

Student field trips over the years to Yosemite/Centennial Grove, Owens Valley, Mexico and Costa Rica have been an enrichment to their lives, not only in seeing these wondrous locations, but to develop camaraderie among themselves as they travel and live together. Many of the students on these trips have never been camping or backpacking before in their lives. As we know, keen friendships play a large part in the quality of campus life.

On balance, I am pleased to be part of the Caltech Y endeavor and to play a small part in the on-going success of this marvelous organization. For me, our mission statement says it all: The Caltech Y enriches student life and challenges students to grow into responsible citizens of the world.
Greetings from an Ex ExComm

Andrew Hafer ‘01

The Caltech Y provided me with by far the most valuable and lasting education that I received during my four years at Caltech. The time I spent with the Y provided me with those critical “soft skills” that are not easily taught in the classroom but which are important for any future pursuit.

The Social Activism Speaker Series (SASS) was born from a combination of my disappointment in the general apathy of my classmates to current social and political issues and the inspiration I received while attending a community service conference on behalf of the Y. With the informal goal of “getting people somewhat riled up” – regardless of the position or issue – I spent six months planning and fund-raising for the series under the mentorship and guidance of the Y staff. In that experience, the Y taught me invaluable lessons in planning, leadership, salesmanship and organization, lessons which I continue to rely upon day in and day out nine years later.

Through the experience of starting SASS, the Y also taught me that, as much as I enjoyed science, what I really loved was taking an inspiration on how to improve my community and turning it into a reality.

Two years after graduation, I fulfilled a longtime dream and served with the Peace Corps in southern Africa, where I helped small entrepreneurs progress towards their dreams.

Currently, I work for a financial services firm in the San Francisco Bay Area where I save pennies and plan my return to development work.
Coming Events (May)

May Preview

by Greg Fletcher, Y Student Activities & Community Services Director

With spring in the air, students at Caltech know to expect some of the best cultural events on campus – in addition to a variety of other outings of course. International Week and Semana Latina joined forces to provide a full schedule of events over the same week.

International Week Events
The now renowned International Week co-ordinated with International Student Programs, features a week of events culminating in the International Food Fair and Culture Show. Events include:

- **Film Screening: “Marwa”** – On Monday, May 5, in Beckman Institute auditorium, “Marwa” will be screened at 8:30 pm, preceded by a reception with the film’s director, Caltech alum Iram Bilal, at 8 p.m. The 19-minute film takes place in 2004 and documents the experiences of Marwa, an Iraqi girl, serving as an interpreter for the captain in charge of the American operation. A post-screening discussion will follow. Iram is also a former recipient of the Studentski Award, who used her funding to explore documentary film making.

- **Film Screening & Lunch: “Korean Treasures – Virtual Museum”** – At noon on Wednesday, May 7, the Korean Student Association will screen a 45-minute film that highlights many artistic treasures of Korea, including a number of important historical art pieces.

- **Lunch Talk: “Nigeria – At the Trigger of Africa”** – From noon to 1 pm on Thursday, May 8, Akin Omigbodun, a sophomore from Nigeria, will share his experiences and perspectives on his home country.

- **International Food Fair and Culture Show** – From 4:30 to 6 pm on Friday, May 9, in Avery Courtyard, over 15 student clubs representing a range of cultures and continents will provide samples of foods from around the world. For $3, 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 at 6 pm. Talented Caltech students representing a number of countries will perform traditional dances, play exotic instruments, and showcase colorful fashion from around the world.

Semana Latina Events
Also well known, Semana Latina, co-ordinated by the Caltech Latino Associations – Club Latino and CLASES – with assistance from the Cultural Programming Group, the Caltech Y, and theme meals from Caltech Dining, features the following events:

- **Salsa Performance** – Angelo Salazar and the salsa band Latin Sol will kick off Caltech’s 15th annual Semana Latina from noon to 1 pm on Monday, May 5, in Winnett quad. Latin Sol is a 10-piece band featuring a blend of salsa and Afro-Cuban rhythms.

- **Mariachi Performance** – Tuesday, May 6 at lunch, will feature the lively sounds of the Mariachi Divas as Semana Latina rolls on.

- **Peruvian Music and Dance Performance** – From noon to 1 pm on Wednesday, May 7, in Winnett quad, Escuela de Baile Tradicional will perform traditional Peruvian dance accompanied by the music of the Victor Vento Live Peruvian band.

- **Brazilian Music and Dance Performance** – From noon to 1 pm on Friday, May 9, in Winnett quad, musicians and dancers will perform Brazilian samba to wrap up the week.

SASS Event
The Social Activism Speaker Series (SASS) will wrap up their academic year collaborating with Engineers for a Sustainable World and the E/ME105 class to bring Paul Polak to campus on May 14 for a lunch discussion. Polak, founder of International Development Enterprises, has pioneered the development and rural mass marketing of affordable technologies through the small enterprise private sector in developing countries. He is author of the recent book, “Out Of Poverty: What Works When Traditional Approaches Fail.”

Y Outdoors Events
Our leaders from the Y-Outdoors committee are also easing into the summer – adventure style.

- **Day Hike** – First on the lineup is a strenuous Day Hike on May 10 to the San Gorgonio Mountains east of Pasadena.

- **Wilderness First Aid** – Also in the works is the second run at a Wilderness First Aid course May 16-18. The weekend training, co-sponsored with the Caltech Alpine Club, will help prepare 30 Caltech students to be better leaders of others in the wilderness and, as a result, make the wilderness a safer and more accessible place for many in our community.

Y-Outdoors programs provide Caltech students, including novices and experienced outdoor enthusiasts, an exciting opportunity to explore with guidance.

Social Event

- **Huntington Tea** – On the social side, the Y ExComm is lining up the annual Huntington Tea event. June 1st will feature a gathering of Caltech grads, undergrads, and faculty at the world renowned Huntington Library and Gardens. Participants will have the opportunity to sample a variety of hors d’oeuvres while mingling in the Tea Room followed by an afternoon to roam the grounds and explore for themselves. The event is always a popular one for students.

Other Events
The ExComm is also looking at events to wrap up the Explore LA Series and the Housner Life Skills Series, including: Surfing, the Body Worlds Exhibit, and Nutrition and Wellness.
## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Note: See [Caltech Y website](http://www.caltechy.org) 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

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Pasadena, CA 91125  
(Elizabeth Hall, SW corner Hill & San Pasqual)

### Location

1350 San Pasqual St  
(West of tennis courts at SW corner Hill & San Pasqual)

### Y Staff

- **Athena Castro** - Executive Director
- **Alycen Chan** - RISE Coordinator
- **Greg Fletcher** - Student Activities & Community Service Director
- **Molly Jones** - Student Activities Coordinator
- **Christopher Kealey** - Marketing & Development Director
- **Carmelita Hearn** - Administrative Assistant

### Board of Directors

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- **Peter Mason** - Treasurer  
- **Peter Liu** - Student ExComm President  
- **Lee Fisher** - Vice Chair  
- **Barbara Heublein** - Secretary

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- Sunny Chun*  
- James Huang*  
- Tom Mannion  
- Don Pinkerton  
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- Richard Beatty  
- Dean Elzina  
- Catherine Jurca  
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- Toni Perpall  
- Norri Sirri

### The Caltech Y News

**Editor:** Gunilla Hastrup

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