Announcements & Reports

The Y Spring Friends Dinner to feature Caltech alumnus Jeff Greason ’88

“The Future of Public and Private Space Exploration”

by Chris Kealey, Y Marketing and Development Director

The Y Spring Friends Dinner will be held at the Athenaeum on May 6 at 6 pm. Please join us as we welcome Jeff Greason back to Caltech for an exciting evening on the future of both public and private space exploration.

Jeff is now President and CEO of XCOR Aerospace, based in Mojave, California. Jeff and his team have quietly made a business of crafting small reliable rocket engines. Their show-piece products are the engines, igniters and concept suborbital vehicles that will make private space travel a reality – sooner rather than later. Greason was cited by Time magazine in 2001 as one of the "Inventors of the Year," and was named by the White House to a panel of independent experts that examined alternatives for advancing the U.S. human space exploration agenda. Chaired by Norman Augustine, the Review of U.S. Human Space Flight Plans Committee examined ongoing and planned NASA activities and present options for a safe, innovative, affordable, and human space flight program

Jeff co-founded XCOR in 1999 after two years managing the propulsion team at the Rotary Rocket Company. Earlier, he served as a technical manager at Intel Corporation. In 1992, he received the Intel Achievement Award for discovering a less expensive BiCMOS technology, which became the basis for the Pentium product line. He holds 18 patents and has authored numerous publications. Jeff received his BS in engineering from Caltech.

“I had always been interested in space, and always thought I would get to go someday. I became a convert to the heretical idea that space transportation could be done ‘privately’ on a for-profit basis. I joined AIAA, bought $2000 of aerospace books, and started reading. I spent my sabbatical from Intel working on business cases and design studies for this area.”

Over the past eleven years, XCOR has become a major player in private-sector spaceships. As the commercial space effort continues to grow, so does NASA’s commitment to fund research in the field – up to $75 million in the next 5 years for companies like XCOR. If Jeff is correct in his assessment, it will be private industry, not NASA, that opens up the new space frontier for humanity.

For reservations to the Spring Friends Dinner, please contact the Caltech Y office (see p 8).

Recent Events (April)

Life Skills Series covers tax filing

By Leslie Tong ’10 and Leon Liu ’10, Y ExComm

For the latest in the Caltech Y Life Skills Series, held on Wednesday, April 7, Mike Noll, a Certified Public Accountant, generously donated his time to present a lunchtime talk on how to file taxes, specifically for the typical college student.

Mike first gave an overview of how taxes work in the United States, and then gave some details about the Federal Income tax forms, including how exemptions and deductions work. Mike also answered many questions from the audience and provided additional material for the participants to look at on their own. It was a very informative session for those students who are just starting to have to file taxes and are learning about the procedures for the first time.

The presentation was attended by about 15 undergraduate and graduate students, who all said the session was both informative and applicable.
**Recent Events** (continued)

**Make A Difference Day**

Approximately 170 students participated in the Caltech Y Make A Difference Day (MAD Day) this year, volunteering their time to support a wide variety of public service projects. Each project team was led by a student. Many members of the Caltech community and Caltech Y Board participated by providing support, such as transportation to the events. MAD Day concluded with a barbecue between 4–6 PM at the Caltech Y. Below are student reports of several of the events.

**LA Arboretum**

*By Debbie Tseng ’11, Y ExComm and Kelly Guan ’12, student*

One of the outdoors sites for this year was the L.A. County Arboretum and Botanical Garden in Arcadia. We led a group of eight undergraduates for our volunteering project at the Arboretum.

We spent a relaxing morning simply strolling around the grounds and enjoying the gardens. The Arboretum is home to dozens of peacocks, and we certainly met up with quite a few during the day!

After lunch, we met up with Jill Morganelli, one of the grounds curators. Jill gave us a small tour of the area as we walked down to the Herb Garden. We were assigned to weed a small area of the garden, which will be the future site for a Beatrix Potter Garden for children.

Jill spoke to us about horticulture and her future plan of the garden, envisioning an area of benches and planting herbs including mint, chamomile, and rosemary.

Thanks to the group, the Arboretum will not have to use any harmful pesticides on the area!

**Move a Child Higher**

*By Pranay Kothari ’11, Y ExComm*

A group of six Caltech undergraduates volunteered their time for Move a Child Higher (MACH-1) at the Hahamongna Watershed Park. MACH-1 is a therapeutic horseback riding program for disabled and special needs children.

Part of our work was leveling the ground and cleaning outside of the horseback riding area to make it safe for the kids should they be running or playing around the premises. Several students also served as sidewalkers – that is, they walked next to the kids and held their legs in place as they rode the horses to ensure they did not lose their balance or fall off.

Toward the end of our stay, a MACH-1 staff member explained to us just how horseback riding was therapeutic for a disabled child. For one, many of the kids are used to being so low to the ground in wheelchairs but gain confidence when they adjust to riding high upon a horse’s back. Additionally, the horse’s hips move similarly to a human’s hips during walking, so the children get the sensation that they are walking themselves. This is an incredible experience for the riders, many of whom have never even used their legs before.

**Rebuilding Together**

*By Leon Liu ’10, Y ExComm*

A group of nine Caltech undergrad and graduate students started out early in the morning at 7:30 AM for a house occupied by an elderly lady in Pasadena. There, they met up with the correspondents from Rebuilding Together, an organization that has rebuilt and renovated many houses belonging to low-income, elderly, or disabled families, and has worked with Caltech students for over 225 projects worth over 2.5 million dollars!

The project this MAD Day is a house on a hill. The asphalt driveway is full of cracks and precipitous slopes, making it dangerous for the elderly lady to walk to her mailbox at the bottom of the hill. Furthermore, the front and backyard lawns were overgrown with weeds. Hence the main tasks were to dig away the old asphalt to make a new driveway and clearing the weeds.
The volunteers got to work right away. The seemingly immovable asphalt was broken up like cookies in the face of the volunteers’ pickaxes and determinism. In all, they broke up and removed more than 1 ton of asphalt. At the same time, others cleared the yards and loaded a container full of vegetation. Still others managed to repaint the doors and windows.

At the end of the day, the difference made was clear, and everyone was satisfied. It was, overall, a strenuous but meaningful day!

**Santa Monica Mountains**

*By Elaine To ‘10, Y ExComm*

My group went to maintain the Natoma Trail in the Santa Monica Mountains with the Santa Monica Mountains Trail Coalition, a nonprofit that maintains a different trail every weekend.

Our main jobs were to clear brush away from the sides of the trail and break up the ground, so it could be tamped down into a wider, smoother trail.

Overall, it was a day of hard work, but very enjoyable and fulfilling!

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Students also participated in MAD Day projects at these other sites:
- Eaton Canyon Nature Center
- Lifeline for Pets
- Heal The Bay
- Boy’s and Girl’s Club of Pasadena
- Southern California State Science Olympiad
- Kidspace Museum
- Keiro Nursing Home
- Alhambra Convalescent Center
- Elizabeth House
- Environmental Charter School

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**PALAC considers health care costs**

*By Xida Zheng ‘12, Y ExComm*

On April 1st, I led a group of nineteen in a PALAC discussion on the rising cost of health care. We looked at two articles from the RAND corporation, one on the cost cutting measures proposed for the state of Massachusetts, the leader in universal health coverage, and another on prescription medicine and copays. To begin the discussion, we asked whether people were for or against the recent health care law. Most saw it as a step in the right direction but not the final solution.

The discussion was framed by radio shows co-produced by This American Life and NPR. The first segment explored how doctors treated patients differently based on which town they were in, the temperament of the doctor and how many doctors were in town. Then, the show examined the role of demanding patient, looking at an anecdote of a doctor refusing to run more tests on a patient despite the insistence of her father. This story points out the tendency of people to want every possible procedure to be done to make sure that their loved one is OK. With these procedures come unnecessary risks of complications. The third segment looked at insurers. In one case, the insurer was forced to hike their premiums because the hospital decided to increase the fees it charged and patients refused to change their doctors. Many people see insurance companies as greedy companies that are just looking out for their bottom line. However, they are perhaps the most influential force in lowering costs, something that everyone wants.

We took a break and the second half focused on how to lower costs. One RAND article suggested a few major improvements that could be made, mostly in how doctors were paid. One seeks to bundle services for one procedure or symptom together into one cost. Another fixed the rate for a procedure at hospitals for all patients. Both looked like promising choices. The participants were very involved in the discussion and thought critically about the articles we read. Some questioned why Medicare savings were not considered. (The study was done for the state of Massachusetts, which cannot change Medicare, so it was not considered.) Some people questioned the practicality of implementation of the methods, but most agreed that these measures were generally good.

We discussed the second article briefly. The paper presented the finding that, as copays rise, people can’t pay and don’t take their drugs resulting in more hospital visits. This finding was not surprising to the participants.

Another radio segment explained how insurance companies and drug companies are in a constant battle over prescription drug costs with clueless patients stuck in the middle. When asked how many people were told how much their drugs cost, one or two did. This points out another cause for increasing cost: the lack of cost awareness that leads to uninhibited spending.

The conversation naturally flowed to people telling the group about their own health care plans, many who were happy with their plans. Not surprisingly, a few supported the idea of a single payer system like those in Europe and Canada.

While we cannot do much but wait for the new law to take effect and see what happens, there are things we can do to understand our own health care plans better. Next time you go to the doctor’s office and the doctor prescribes you some medicine, ask how much the drug actually costs.

The participants left the discussion with a better understanding of the whole health care system seen from many different angles. The more we are aware of how much healthcare costs, the more likely we are to recover from the cost crisis that we are in.
Recent Events (continued)

Y Outdoor Event features Sunrise Hike in Eaton Canyon

By Leon Liu ’10, Y ExComm

Early in the morning on Friday, April 9, graduate student Laura Peskin led a group of nine Caltech undergraduate and graduate students on a short hike in the beautiful Eaton Canyon.

Even though the group was not able to see the sunrise from the Canyon, they enjoyed the beautiful scenery, morning fresh air, and crossing streams a dozen times. At the end of the well-maintained trail, the group arrived at a beautiful waterfall draining into a small pond. The group relaxed, took pictures, and ate delicious muffins prepared by Laura before returning promptly to Caltech in time for their morning classes and exams.

Overall it was a very enjoyable and refreshing experience for the group.

Caltech World Fest

by Greg Fletcher, Y Student Activities & Community Services Director

Once again, the campus joined us for one of the biggest celebrations at Caltech – the celebration of our community from around the world. Each day provided a new opportunity to explore. Coordinated by International Student Programs and the Caltech Y.

Test Your Global IQ

(Mon, April 19, Noon)

The Caltech community had the opportunity to take the trivia challenge! Answering 5 questions on the World Fest Quiz entered them to win great prizes, including free admission to Friday's International Food Fair!

Costa Rica: Science from the Tropic

(Tues, April 20, Noon)

When you think about Costa Rica, you probably think of beautiful beaches, fun vacations and adventure in the rainforest. While this is true, Costa Rica has also produced various influential scientists throughout its history. Participants learned about two such scientists, Clodomiro Picado and Franklin Chang Diaz, and their contributions to science. Presented by Sebastian Rojas Mata.

Kalaya’an Mendoza

(Tues, April 20, 7:30 PM)

Social justice has been revolutionized by Web 2.0 tools like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, from the protesters in Iran tweeting during the elections last June to Tibetan Exiles using YouTube to broadcast their story during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. “Activism v 2.0: Technology and Grassroots Organizing” focuses on New Media in grassroots movements. Attendees heard about a variety of efforts and causes in the new world of activism from Kalaya’an Mendoza, Field Organizer, Amnesty International-USA.

Running Through Romania

(Wed, April 21, Noon)

Ioana Aanei, a junior from Romania, presented a collection of pictures from some of the most interesting places in Romania and gave us a crash course on Romanian culture, including history, language, traditions and cuisine on a whirlwind tour of Romania.

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Brasil

(Thur, April 22, Noon)

Ever wondered about Brazil beyond samba and soccer? Graduate student Thiago S. Gonçalves talked about his home country, discussing the history and culture of this South American country over lunch.

International Food Fair & Culture Show

(Fri, April 23, 4:30-6:00 PM)

Of course, the highlight of the week for 500 lucky Techers was a taste of the world from 4:30 - 5:30 PM! For just $3, sample foods from China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Korea, Malaysia, Romania, Thailand, and Turkey. After eating, many stayed to see traditional dances, hear exotic instruments, and view colorful fashions from around the world.
Meet the ExComm

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

Jonathan Tsai ‘10

by Kevin Nguyen, Student Activities Coordinator

Jonathan Tsai is an upcoming graduating senior ExComm member, who has been a great resource for the Caltech Y. He is from San Jose, CA, lives in Fleming House, and is completing his biology pre-med degree. He has been very busy this academic year interviewing at various schools and doing lab work.

Jonathan is working in the Baltimore lab and has conducted research on melanoma and other topics. His research has led to the filing of a patent and he is hoping to publish soon.

Jonathan joined the ExComm at the end of his freshman year and has been involved ever since. He likes the Y for its social activities, meeting new people, and the interesting events that the Y has to offer. During his tenure at Caltech, Jonathan has also participated in the activities of other organizations on campus including the cross-country team and photographing for the yearbook and newspaper. He loves telling people about the Y, especially his favorite memory of when he participated in MAD Day and spent a day bowling with mentally challenged youth. It could be perceived that it has greatly impacted him.

Jonathan is obviously very motivated and passionate about what he is doing in his life. He is looking forward to exploring all the options and opportunities that he has after Caltech. He wants to do some work in research academia and is going to be in the Stanford MD/PhD program next year.

We are all very excited for Jonathan and cannot wait to see what accomplishments he will achieve.

Coming Events (May)

May Programs Preview

by Greg Fletcher, Y Student Activities & Community Services Director

As SpringTerm rolls toward summer, the Y-ExComm, Y-Outdoors, Community Service Coordinators, and Social Activism Speaker Series Committee are still working to make sure that May brings more exciting programs.

Social Activism Speaker Series – SASS will wrap up their academic year bringing to campus a talk by Jeremy Seashill on May 17. Jeremy Seashill is the author of the international best-seller, “Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army.” He is a frequent contributor to The Nation magazine and a correspondent for the national radio and TV program Democracy Now!

Y-Outdoors – Our leaders from the Y-Outdoors committee are also eager for an adventurous summer but still planning some activities for the final months of spring. First on the lineup is a Full Moon Hike in the San Gabriel Mountains just north of Pasadena. The Adventure 101 Lunch Series wraps up with a documentary on “The Effects of Altitude” shot in Denali National Park. The Y-Outdoors programs provide Caltech students, including novices and experienced outdoor enthusiasts, an exciting opportunity to explore with guidance.

Explore LA Series – On the social side, the Y ExComm is also wrapping up the Explore LA Series with a trip to the musical “Chicago” at the Pantages Theater. A lottery will be used to select 25 lucky students, who will have a chance to go to the Pantages for the award winning show.

Semana Latina – The ExComm also decided to co-sponsor some of Semana Latina, an event highlighting Latino culture and coordinated by the student club CLASES. In addition to funding, the Y will provide audio equipment and set up for the events.

Community Services – As always, there will also be a regular line up of Community Service opportunities – including wrapping up the RISE Tutoring Program, Reading To Kids, ASOSAL Tutoring, and the Union Station Adopt a Meal program.
CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

May 2010

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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.

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