Changing the Lives of Students...*One Squad at a Time!*

Summer 2015

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About This Newsletter
You will learn how MSCA helps increase the diversity of our future California workforce by preparing girls and underrepresented minority students to build STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) skills.

Goodbye from Our Program Director

After 40 years of full-time employment, starting in 1975 as a middle school teacher in rural Illinois, and for the last 12 years as the Director of MOUSE Squad of CA, I will be retiring, as of June 30, 2015. It has been a pleasure working with you, and I am so proud of the growth we have accomplished through MSCA:

- Served thousands of students throughout California in science, technology, engineering, and math education,
- Inspired many students we serve to pursue tech-related careers, and
- Worked to bring diversity to the industry.

Although I am leaving, Aspiranet, MOUSE Squad's parent organization, will carry on with the mission to empower underserved youth to learn, lead, create, and collaborate with technology. MOUSE Squad, as a program of Aspiranet, contributes to the organization's strategic initiatives to create greater educational equity by providing greater access to the worldwide technology industry. I leave with a strong leadership group in place to continue the work with our schools and funders.

If you have any questions as we make this transition, please contact Andrea Jones. Thank you again to all of the wonderful support I received through these years from students, teachers, administrators, corporate and foundation funders, individual donors, and non-profit partners; the growth and impact of this program would not have been possible without you!

Best regards,

Jan Half

Tech Speaker Series

This past spring, MOUSE Squad California kicked off a pilot project to encourage STEM education and pathways for young people with its Tech Speaker Series. In the pilot project, MSCA partnered with local companies to bring technology professionals into the schools. Presentations ranged from female CEOs showcasing their startups, traditional career panels, hands-on coding demonstrations and motivational talks. Many different companies were represented in the series, including Cisco, Fitbit and Symantec and startups such as NowMap and 2025Labs. Highlights included twelve members of the Fitbit Product Engineering Team demonstrating how their product is made from design through execution. The teacher, Heidi Languis, said, "I can't believe how engaged our students were! They got so much out of the presentation and we can't wait to have Fitbit back!"

> "These (MSCA) kids are brilliant! With kids like this, the future holds wonderful things for all of us! Thank you for including me in this project—it was incredibly inspiring." – Lance Perry, VP of IT for Cisco

Venkat Ramesh, also from Cisco, gave a hands-on coding demo to elementary students at DeVargas Elementary. His presentation utilized aspects of his work, lessons from Khan Academy and MOUSE Squad activities. Venkat also walked away impressed and committed to returning, "I couldn't believe the questions these kids were asking! I had no concept of programming at their age—they were so engaged and knowledgeable!"

Thank you to all the speakers in our series! MSCA will launch the Tech Speaker Series at 25-30 sites in the next school year. Just one way MOUSE Squad is encouraging diversity in STEM learning! If you're interested in bringing a speaker into your school or would like to present, please contact Andrea Jones, Program Manager at andrea@mousesquadca.org

Corporate Volunteer Spotlight: Xilinx

We'd like to thank Xilinx for their continued support of MOUSE Squad Student Tech Leadership. As part of the Xilinx ecosystem, MSCA receives funding and support for programs at five schools in Silicon Valley. At Fammatre Elementary in San Jose, Xilinx engineers, led by Brady Ruebusch, teach two 8-week programs that incorporate MSCA curriculum and Xilinx created activities. It's a great partnership and we're grateful to be a part of it. Thank you Brady and the Xilinx team!

It's Been A Great Year!

It's been an exciting year at MOUSE Squad Student Tech Leadership! We served more schools than ever before; our evaluation process reached 70% of all youth and 90% of our coordinators and schools participated in innovative and exciting projects.

Green Tech

Several schools participated in the MOUSE NY Green Tech pilot. Mountain Elementary, a small school located in the Santa Cruz Mountains, spent the spring semester exploring the connection between technology and the environment. They dove into the first two levels of GreenTech certification exploring where people get energy and how to use it best. A wonderful aspect of this certification program is the 'hands-on' building and problem solving.

Students built a mini-generator, solved the question of how to turn a turbine, constructed and tested various batteries, and explored solar energy by using it to power some small toys. The school has been retrofitting lighting and heating and this gave them a platform to discuss how they can make choices that allow them to leave a smaller carbon footprint. According to teacher Sharon Espinosa, "each of the Squad members are looking at energy in the world around them with a mind to conserve!"

State Testing and the Common Core
MOUSE Squads throughout the state were instrumental in readying their schools for online testing. At Coronado Middle School in San Diego, MOUSE Squad students helped ready the entire district for testing by supporting the District technicians with verifying internet connectivity, readying peripherals such as mice and headphones and assuring each classroom had enough materials.

After testing was over at each grade level the MOUSE students collected the netbook carts, organized the items in the cart, and returned the carts to the correct area. Jennifer Landry, MSCA Coordinator, "Common Core testing, combined with MAP testing, was an 8 week process that could not have happened as effectively and efficiently without MOUSE Squad."

Donor Spotlight: Thank You for Your Support!

Thank you to all of the supporters. With your support, we can continue building and growing our squads across California. There's still time to become a supporter; click here and learn how you can help transform the lives of our students.

About MOUSE Squad of California

MSCA is the Student Tech Leadership program of Aspiranet, a CA nonprofit that provides after-school and youth development programs, and children and family services. MSCA is a licensed partner of MOUSE, a New York City-based nonprofit.

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