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Contact: Bev Lenihan, Board Member, bev@reresults.com, (m) 408.981.6066

Cupertino Library Foundation Announces 2014 S⁴-Super Summer Science Search Contest

Middle school students learn critical thinking around Common Core Standards, using SCCLD online databases

APRIL 7, 2014 -- CUPERTINO, CA—The Cupertino Library Foundation (CLF) announces its third annual S⁴-Super Summer Science Search Contest for Cupertino Union School District (CUSD) middle school students. Students from any of the five Cupertino middle schools who will be out-going 6th through 8th graders this June are eligible. Registration opens June 1 on the CLF website: www.cupertinelibraryfoundation.org. Application entries are due no later than midnight PDT, August 1, 2014.

“Every year this contest gets more interesting,” said Bev Lenihan, Cupertino Library Foundation board member, and project director. “This year, we have included high schoolers on our project task force. They bring a vantage point that helped create the problem statement and the marketing that is relevant to the middle schoolers—and they are fun to be around. They also know how to make the best use of the robust online databases at the Cupertino Library.” Community leader, Pam Marino, is serving as S⁴ project coordinator.

The teens have recommended a few enhancements this year: The problem-statement incorporates opportunities for those interested in music, the arts, and medicine along with technology. Study sessions to encourage participation will take place from May through July. The name change to S⁴ accounts for the full name—Super Summer Science Search. The identity for the program was designed by a teen, and teen members put together a promotional video and other marketing materials. This year, the winning teams will do a short presentation at the celebration event August 16th.

There is no cost to enter the contest. The student must have a Santa Clara County Library district library card, which is free to any student attending CUSD schools. In 2013, over 200 students registered for the contest, then called S3. The goal for 2014 is 1,000, which is 20 percent of the district’s middle school student enrollment.

The prizes are consistent with last year’s: Each member of the winning team (up to three participants) will receive an iPad mini. Each member of the second place team (up to three members) receives \$100 each, and each member of the third place team (up to three members) receives \$50 each. All participants will receive a recognition letter, and the top 25 teams will receive a certificate, and invitation to the celebration event in August.

The 2014 contest parameters require the students to choose a specific scientific topic, contribution or invention that relates to technology, or medicine, or music, or art. Several questions need to be addressed in a written paper, no more than five pages in length; a typed journal; a page of their citations; and a presentation and/or video.

“The S^4 science contest is a big help to our parents and teachers,” said Mary Enright, CUSD resource teacher for math and science. “The team approach and online research components of this science contest are key to our Common Core Standards as well. The students who participate will be well positioned for what is required in high school, and of course, in their careers—no matter what they choose.”

The judging takes place in three flights. The first flight is done by the S^4 Task Force, to assess meeting of all the requirements. The second flight of judging will be done by a teen group, including members of the Cupertino Library Teen Advisory Board, and past winners. The third flight of judging will be done by professionals in the community who represent technology and other relevant fields. In 2013 members of Apple, HP, Intel and others participated.

“Our aspirations are for this contest to be replicated under the S^4 banner throughout the other libraries in the district, and beyond in the next few years,” said Eno Schmidt, president of the Cupertino Library Foundation. “We envision a process for preparing middle schoolers for the rigor of high school, and the infusion of project-based learning at all levels.” Positioning students to feel confident entering other science contests such as the Synopsys, Intel, Tech Challenge, Science Olympiads is an additional objective of the S^4 program.

Winner for 2013 were: First Place—each receiving Apple iPad Minis were the team of Alexander Ivanov and Rajiv Nelakanti, both out-going 7th graders of Cupertino Middle School. Second Place—receiving \$100 cash was Niyati Sriram, an out-going 8th grader from Cupertino Middle School; and Third Place—receiving \$50 cash was Shivalika Chavan, an out-going 8th grader from Kennedy Middle School.

The Cupertino Library Foundation is a 501(c)3 Public Benefit Corporation with the purpose to raise money to continue programs encouraging life-long learning and self-improvement through the Cupertino Library. The Foundation has the Non-Profit Seal of Approval by Guidestar demonstrating satisfaction of transparency requirements and is a member of the Google for Nonprofits program receiving tools to work efficiently. It seeks major donations from corporations and the business community and from other foundations as well as individual donations and planned gifts and bequests. For further information visit: www.cupertino.libraryfoundation.org

The Cupertino Library operates Monday through Thursday 10AM-9PM; Friday and Saturday, 10AM-6PM; and Sunday, noon-6PM. www.sccl.org

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