

## Discovery Corner

## Museum memories

Having always loved children's museums, taking my kids (now 30, 27, 24, 16, and 15) to one whenever we went to a town that had one, imagine my elation when the Santa Maria Valley Discovery Museum opened its doors in 1996. I became one of the first members, and a year later when I asked if there was any way I could help, I was invited to join the board of directors.

Board service was fun, interesting, and challenging. I remember being at a strategic planning retreat in 1999 or so, when we were asked about what we dreamed to see in the future. My response was that I wanted to see my name on the plaque of a new museum building! I had no idea that not only would that dream come true, but that I would still be involved in the museum many years later.

I was the board president when we signed the contracts with the designers and builders of the new museum. As my children grew, my personal activity with the museum decreased, but I always remained a supporter. One of my daughters volunteered at the museum, and I have recently become involved again myself. Though I don't have any grandchildren (yet!) and my kids are too old for most of the museum's activities, I know the importance the museum played in my family's life and in the lives of all the families who have walked through the doors.

I am sure that there are many of you whose lives the Discovery Museum has touched. If so, we want to know about you. If you have been involved in the Santa Maria Valley Discovery Museum in any way, shape, or form any time in the past 20 years, please let us know. We not only want you to celebrate the Museum's 15th anniversary with us on Jan. 27, 2012, but we want your valuable memory and insight to help us build the historical timeline of the museum's past and to plan for the future.

*Suzanne Levy compiled this edition's Discovery Corner, a weekly column in the Sun, highlighting events, science activities, and more for the Santa Maria Valley Discovery Museum at 705 S. McClelland in Santa Maria. Send comments to [discoverycorner@santamariasun.com](mailto:discoverycorner@santamariasun.com).*

## What Kids Are Reading

## How to Teach a Slug to Read

by Susan Pearson  
illustrated by David Slonim  
recommended for ages 5 to 8

Teaching a slug to read requires some strategy, but it's worth it.

That's the premise of this tale, which involves a human boy coaching a slug mother in her efforts to teach a young slug the way of books. Story selection is key, as are gentle steps—or easy, slimy glides?—along the path: learning new words, sounding out words, and spotting repetition. The joy that brightens a young slug's eyestalks upon realization of a new skill is wonderful to behold.

Susan Pearson's patient prose is something like a primer for anyone looking to impart basic reading skills on an up-and-coming book enthusiast. It's easy to imagine a child in the place of Little Slug—and that's meant to be taken in the best way possible. David Slonim's illustrations make the little garden pests cute, and kids will surely enjoy recognizing their own tentative forays into the world of understanding print.

*"What Kids Are Reading" is a regular feature in the Sun, highlighting children's books available for young readers in Santa Maria. This week's recommendation was made by Executive Editor Ryan Miller.*

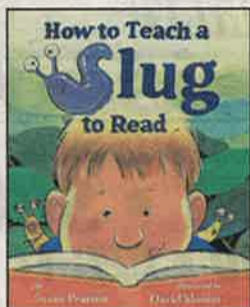


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DUNES CENTER

**FIND ANY PRINTS?** This winter break, from Dec. 19 to 22, the Guadalupe Dunes Center is offering a forensics day camp. Participating children will get to test for fingerprints (seen here), determine blood types, and more. The camp will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Dunes Center, 1055 Guadalupe St., in Guadalupe. For more information, call 343-2455. Space is limited.

## Study science over winter break

Think you have what it takes to work in crime scene investigation? The Guadalupe Dunes Center is planning a forensics winter day camp for children in fifth through ninth grades. The camp will run Dec. 19 through 22 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Dunes Center at 1055 Guadalupe St., in Guadalupe. The program is offered free of charge, but a \$50 deposit is needed to reserve a spot for a child. The deposit will be returned in full at the end of the camp. Space is limited. As of Dec. 1, the camp was already half full. Dunes Center employees will start a waiting list for spring 2012 camps once the forensics session reaches capacity.

Students in the camp will spend four days investigating such topics as fingerprinting; acid, base, and lipids tests; decomposition; and determining blood types. Each lesson helps develop skills in observation, chemistry, mathematics, and critical thinking, all of which professionals use to solve crimes.

For more information about the forensics camp and other Dunes Center activities, visit [dunescenter.org](http://dunescenter.org) or call 343-2455. Registration packets can be picked up in person at the center Thursday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## More winter break camp options

The Santa Maria Valley YMCA is currently working with local elementary school principals to develop curriculum for a winter break camp that's both educational and fun. Several camps will be offered Dec. 19 through Jan. 13 for children ages 4 through 12.

The cost is \$100 per week for YMCA members and \$115 non-members. Weekly themes include Holidays Galore, ARTrageous, Story Time and Fairy Tales, Y-Fit, and—new this year—a two-day LEGO Play Well workshop. Financial assistance is available. The camps require a minimum of 12 participants to run.

For more information, contact the YMCA at 937-8521.

## Hancock offers classes for caregivers of children with special needs

This spring, Allan Hancock College's early childhood studies program is offering two classes for people who care for children with special needs.

Infant Intervention (ECS 113, CRN 42922) is designed as an introductory overview for working with infants and toddlers at risk for special needs and their families. Students will examine risk factors, learn how to access community resources, discuss strategies for assisting families, and explore using playtime to encourage physical and mental development. This three-unit class will be offered on Tuesdays beginning Jan. 24, 2012, at 3:20 p.m. on the college's Santa Maria campus.

The Preschool Child with Special Needs (ECS 112, CRN 41071) class is designed to provide an overview of the characteristics of preschool children with special needs. Participants will study educational techniques geared toward such children. Students will address their own strengths and weaknesses, learn strategies for overcoming care-giving challenges, and learn about resources available to educators, special needs children, and their families.

This three-unit class will be offered Tuesday evenings beginning Jan. 24, 2012, at 6:30 p.m. on the college's Santa Maria campus.

The spring 2012 class schedule is available online at [hancockcollege.edu](http://hancockcollege.edu).

For more registration information, call 922-6966, Ext. 3248; for information about early childhood studies classes, call Ext. 3381. ○

*School Scene is compiled by Managing Editor Amy Asman. Information should be sent to the Sun via fax, e-mail, or mail.*

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