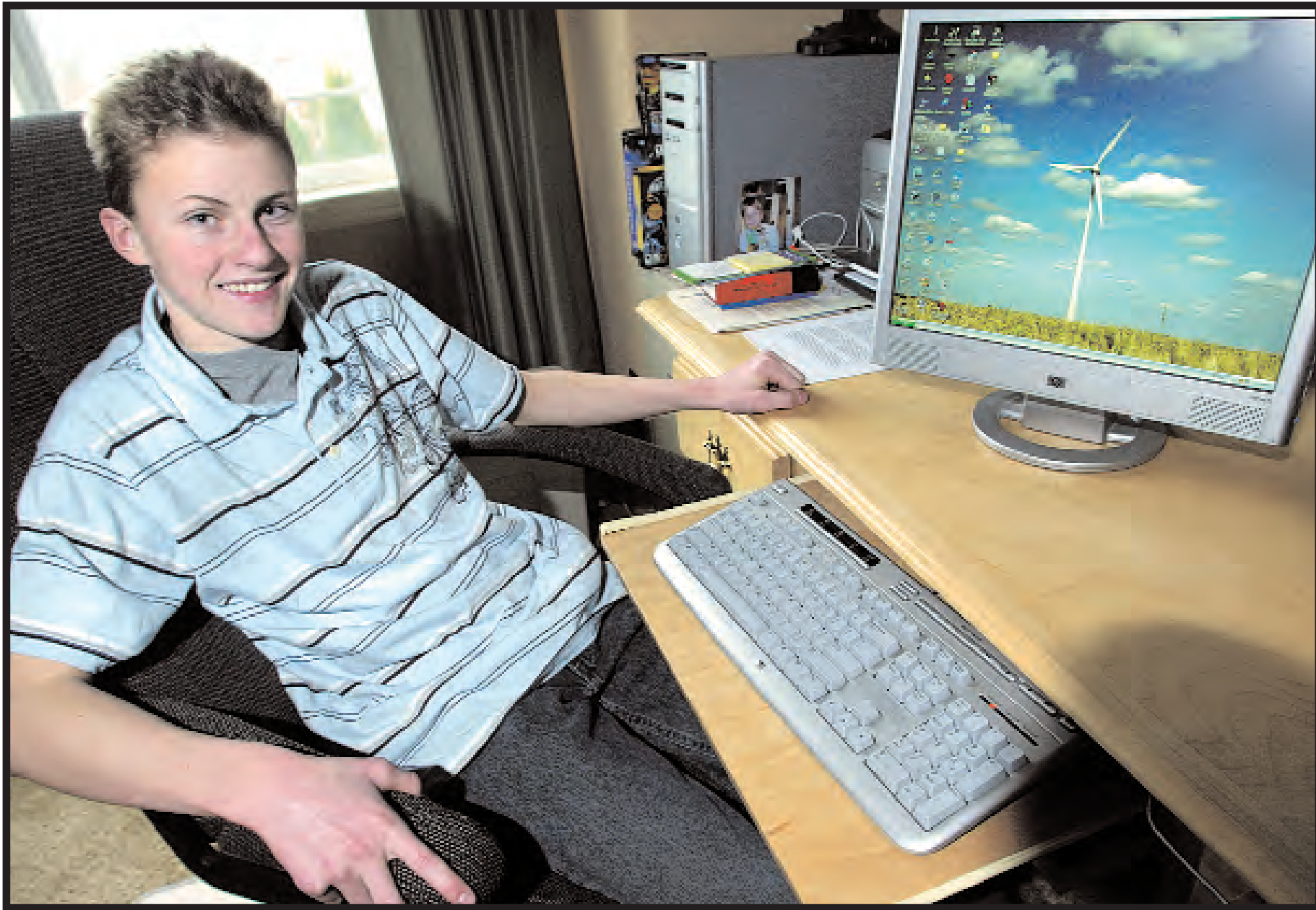


WINNER IN TWO WRITING CONTESTS

Going GREEN



Ryan Chalk/The Reporter

Matthew Rounds earned top honors, not only in The Reporter's Campus Star contest, but also in the Solano County Reading Association competition.

Zero-energy homes just make sense

By Matthew Rounds
Honorable Mention-Feature
Writing
Division: 7-8 Grade

Color of a winner
'Going Green' was submitted to both The Reporter's Campus Star and the Solano County Reading Association writing contests and won honors in both competitions.

So, what's so cool about this new "green" home idea? There are lots of things that are great about it, and I can tell you some of them.

A "green" home, also called a zero-energy home, is a house that conserves energy and can fully or partially power itself. One of the most important things is the photovoltaic roof tiles, which provide a large amount of energy for the home. They look a lot like regular tiles and not like large visible panels.

Another money saver is the point-of-use water heater. It provides fast hot water and it fits in a smaller space. Another breakthrough is soy insulation, which has many energy saving benefits.

The first great thing about a

"green" house is the photovoltaic roof tiles. As I mentioned before, they look a lot like regular roof tiles, therefore they don't stand out like most large solid solar panels.

Photovoltaic means that they collect solar energy and can power any of the electric appliances in a house. You can even make enough energy to sell it back to the electric companies! It is the best way to generate electricity without using coal, oil fired, or hydroelectric sources that will either pollute the earth or damage the environment — and the sun's energy is free, clean, and never runs out! You will be able to save a lot of money every month.

Another "green" benefit is the point-of-use water heater. It is smaller than regular water heaters because it doesn't use a big tank where the water just sits there and has to

be reheated constantly in order to maintain its set temperature.

With the point-of-use heater, you get nearly instantaneous hot water; the water is heated as it goes through the pipes in the unit and is delivered directly to the faucet. This way you don't have to waste water while waiting for heat. That will lower your water bills and gas bill while saving fresh water and even further reducing fossil fuel use.

A third innovation is soy insulation. It is a foam spray that goes into the walls of a house to replace the usual fiberglass insulation that contains the harmful chemical formaldehyde.

According to biobased.net, once the soy is spayed on, it will grow to 100 times its size to fill every tiny area where air could get through. Soy is

a renewable resource, grown by more than 600,000 farmers nationwide. It keeps bad air filled with pollen and mold out, and clean conditioned air in.

These are only three of the many great benefits of a zero-energy home. Going "green" is a big money saver, and it isn't just some short-lived trend. There were only 2,500 "green" homes in 2000. That number soared to 14,600 in 2004! Imagine what it could be in 2008!

This is a way to help the environment by using renewable resources, conserving water, and reducing the world's dependence on fossil fuels. Everyone should have a "green" home to help make our planet a better place to live!

The author was a seventh-grader at Notre Dame School in Vacaville when this was submitted in February 2007.

The Buzz

ACE program holds night for parents

By Reporter Staff

The Vacaville ACE Program at Markham Elementary School will hold a parent information and orientation night at 7 p.m. Jan. 29 in the ACE Building at Markham School.

The orientation will provide an overview of the program, as well as an opportunity for prospective parents to talk with current ACE parents about the program.

Parents interested in enrolling their children in ACE for the 2008-09 school year must attend orientation as well as complete classroom and activity observations prior to enrolling.

In coordination with the Vacaville Unified School District, the ACE program was established in 1991 by parents who wanted to become more involved in their children's education. While the program is in a public school, parent participation in the program is required.

In addition to teaching state-adopted core curriculum, the program also includes a thematic-based curriculum, multi-age classrooms, home learning projects, curriculum-relevant field trips, multicultural days and service learning projects.

Young filmmakers invited to enter

Do you have an aspiring filmmaker between the ages of 7 to 13 living in your home?

A contest offered by MeetMeAtTheCorner.org, the Web site that allows kids to take virtual field trips of fascinating destinations, is asking all future Coppolas and Spielbergs to submit a video podcast interview of the most interesting person they know.

Viewers will vote on their favorite submission. The winning filmmaker will receive a \$250 cash prize.

All videos must be 15 minutes or less in length, submitted on a MiniDV tape, and postmarked before Feb. 29.

Visit <http://www.MeetMeAtTheCorner.org/episodes/howtosubmit/index.shtml> for a complete video making guide, submission rules, and mailing information.

Suisun Valley 4-H plans its meeting

The Suisun Valley 4-H Club will hold its next meeting at 7 p.m. Jan. 28 at the Suisun Valley Fire Protection District Fire Station on Clayton Road.

Members will participate in games and conduct a joke contest. Discussion will focus on the upcoming Judging Contest and the Tri-Tip Dinner.

For more information regarding the County 4-H Program please contact Valerie Williams, Solano County 4-H Program Representative at 784-1319.

College workshop set at Vaca High

Vacaville High School has scheduled a financial aid workshop for college-bound students and their parents Jan. 29.

The session is from 7 to 9 p.m. in the school's library. According to school counselor Heidi Garcia, a financial aid adviser from Solano Community College will be on hand to answer questions and discuss the process.

The workshop will touch on the types of aid available and offer a basic rundown of how to get going.

Teenagers can choose to work or be lazy

By Lexi Parmer
Honorable mention, Opinion Writing
High school division

Are teenagers today getting more stupid or lazy? Many teens would like to put the blame on being stupid, because then they can blame it on something or someone else.

They might say, "It's society's fault for not teaching me the right way" or "The environment is polluted" or "With all this junk food, I just can't learn," or "IT's just my teenage hormones." However, I believe most teenagers just choose to be lazy.

"Well, I tried." This is phrase that I hear so many times when I turn to another student in class and ask if she did the homework.

Trying is not enough. Doing is. Why do teenagers just "try" on their homework, but, in other aspects of

their life, they work hard? If a young man says, "I want to play basketball," he will not just try. Instead, he will spend many hours a day working on his dribbling and free throws until he is exhausted.

Why won't a teenager spend that much time and effort studying?

My parents have always pushed me not to just try but to work as hard as I can. As part of my mom's campaign to teach me about the importance of working hard, I had to watch a documentary called "Spell Bound," which shows kids competing in the National Spelling Bee.

In this documentary, one of the competitors is a young Indian boy who came with his family to America. The boy and his father worked for hours every day studying.

Why? The boy's father explains he came to America because if you

study and work hard here, you will succeed, but, he notes, that is not the way it is in most other countries.

Teenagers have so much opportunity here! Why can't teenagers in America appreciate what they have?

Another problem of laziness in teenagers is they often make fantasy goals instead of realistic ones. This leads to a teen giving up or never taking real steps to succeed because the goal is not real.

So many teens tell me that they plan to be singers, movie stars, basketball players, in short, celebrities. Well, most will grow up to just be regular people — but that's OK.

When teens only set these fantasy goals, they will most likely never reach them. Also, these goals seem easy because they require no education to reach them.

Why don't teenagers dream of

being doctors, engineers, chemists and architects rather than celebrities?

They don't because these goals require lots of effort. They would have to go to and do well in school for a long time to reach such goals. So, being lazy seems easier in the short term. Sadly, in the long run, we lose out on living a real life and really achieving something important.

No one can force a teen to overcome laziness; you have to make the choice for yourself. No, teens aren't stupid. Being lazy is a personal choice, but you can choose to succeed. All you have to do is set realistic goals and put in the work and time needed.

The author was a sophomore at Buckingham Charter Magnet School when this was submitted in February 2007.