

## Science club explores 'Music and the Brain'

By Sue Stafford  
Correspondent

The Belfry will host a multimodal presentation on Music and the Brain by Dr. Bob Collins, as part of the Sisters Science Club's Frontiers in Science series on Tuesday, April 26.

Collins will explore what music is and where it comes from, using videos, musical instruments, and audience singing. He will also look at the interaction between music and the brain and how different music activates the brain in different ways.

Over the past 10 years there has been an explosion of new information concerning the ways music can help children with attention disorders and adults with Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

The Sundance Film Festival documentary "Alive Inside" details how the Music and Memory program is being used to stimulate engagement and verbalization in dementia patients who were thought to be nonverbal.

By creating personalized playlists of their favorite music for patients, which they listen to with earphones on an iPod, emotions are tapped, bypassing the intellect, and stimulating feelings and expression. Hearing their favorite music can also help to ground them, easing confusion and agitation.

Author Aldus Huxley, in his book "Music at Night and Other Essays," describes the transcendent power of music and why it sings to our souls, being the most spiritually resonant of the arts.

"... all the things that, to the human spirit, are most profoundly significant, can only be experienced, not expressed... that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music," he wrote. He refers to music

as humanity's most powerful medium of expression.

Collins will explore how and why music so powerfully expresses our humanity.

"Why is there music, song and dance in every culture everywhere? Music does not enhance the survival of an individual or our species. But we might as well ask why we have fire-building, airplanes, and the Internet. Like music, these are inventions of the brain that have become part of the human fabric, stitching that brings us all together," Collins said.

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— Aldus Huxley

Collins, co-founder of the Sisters Science Club, is the retired head of the UCLA neurology department and a resident of Sisters. His current interests are many and varied, including his work as an artist and published author.

Doors open at The Belfry at 6 p.m., with light fare and beverages available for purchase. There will also be music videos playing. The hour-long program begins at 7 p.m. Admission is free for Science Club donors and students, \$5 for the general public. This promises to be a popular event so come early to assure seating.

## SMS students take on chess challenge

On the morning of April 8, four Sisters Middle School students prepared themselves to go head-to-head against the best middle-school-aged chess competitors in the state at this year's Chess for Success state tournament.

Held annually, the competition is a friendly way for the students that excel at chess to meet and play games both as a team and individually. In winning first place in the regional tournament last January, the SMS Chess Club earned a spot at the state competition, where they competed as a team.

Eighth-graders Brody Lofdahl and Sasha Komar, alongside sixth-graders Ashton King and Matthew Falconer, comprised the team. The tournament played under Swiss rules, meaning that how well the team does cumulatively, not individually, determines whether they won or lost the round. As a team, Sisters had a rocky start but ended in a four-way tie for sixth place.

Twenty-six teams competed overall, but almost every increment had a tie of



PHOTO PROVIDED

Sisters Middle School students competed at the state chess tournament.

some kind due to the scoring and ranking system.

In addition, Brody Lofdahl and Ashton King proved themselves the best chess players in the region for their grade at regionals, leading them to qualify as individuals on top of the team participation. On Saturday, April 9, they competed on their own, this time scored on how they performed alone.

Overall, the SMS chess team had an excellent experience and every member learned valuable lessons about

the game, whether they were chess veterans or first-time newbies. Lofdahl, the senior player, said the first game he played was "the best game I've played in my life."

While none of the students had ever been to the state competition before, Falconer (who is the youngest on the team) performed admirably for a first-year participant in the chess club.

The Sisters Middle School chess club meets late-start Wednesday mornings and is coached by Ethan Ferwalt.