

Canyon views

# Eclipse lessons encourage student interest in science



DAN VASEN

Experiencing the Great American Eclipse was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but long after the shadow has faded, it's still likely to leave a lasting impression on children, and hopefully inspire them to learn more about science.

Many in the scientific community think it will, and feel this week's total solar eclipse is equivalent to the Apollo Lunar Landing on the moon for our younger generation of today.

Previous eclipses have assisted scientists in many ways since the mid-1800s, including the discovery of helium, and testing Albert Einstein's theory of relativity. If the eclipse prompts some of today's students to study science, imagine the contributions they might make in the future?

The Chair of the International Astronomical Union's Working Group on Solar Eclipses, Jay Pasachoff, put it this way: "The most important scientific outcome from this year's eclipse may be more fundamental: inspiring a 7- or 8-year-old girl or boy somewhere to enter a career of science, perhaps even leading to a fantastically wonderful discovery 20 or 30 years from now."

Learning about space has been a lifelong hobby of mine. In 1979, the year of the last total solar eclipse to cross over Oregon, I was a sixth-grader in Southern California and my dad would take me to visit the famous Griffith Observatory which had a large solar telescope. I also remember my seventh-grade science teacher who inspired me to pursue a career in science.

When I started teaching science 22 years ago at a brick and mortar high school in Portland, I never imagined I would be spending part of my summer vacation camping out in Central Oregon to observe this epic astronomical event.

Your Turn

Have a topic, issue or viewpoint pertinent to Silverton or the east Willamette Valley you would like to share? The Silverton Appeal Tribune welcomes letters to the editor up to 250 words, or submissions to the Your Turn section, from 600 to 750 words, on topics of broader interest.

Contact Justin Much at 503-508-8157 or [jmuch@salem.gannett.com](mailto:jmuch@salem.gannett.com).

When my tenth school year at Oregon Connections Academy starts this fall I'll have plenty of ecliptic show-and-tell material to share with students and staff.

If families had a chance to observe the eclipse from a location in the path of totality or watched it live on TV or streamed online, their children will certainly benefit. When kids see scientific phenomenon like the eclipse happening in the real world, it helps them make connections to what they learned in school.

Although the eclipse is over, for many children their interest in the universe may have just begun. This rare solar spectacle offers many teachable moments that teachers, parents and students can refer to for years to come.

The timing for this eclipse corresponds nicely with back-to-school season and children will be energized to learn more about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

Not only can children explore STEM concepts, such as mathematical calculations to predict future eclipses, but they can also integrate history, art, writing, and other disciplines into eclipse education. Try a tasty experiment using Oreo cookies to demonstrate the phases of the moon, or ask your student(s) to write a letter to themselves about their eclipse story and put it in a time capsule not to be opened until the next total solar

eclipse comes in 2024.

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to research this rare solar spectacle, citizen scientists can also get in on the fun. NASA recently launched a new Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) program ([observer.globe.gov](http://observer.globe.gov)) so people around the world can collect data about the Earth's atmosphere.

The NASA Eclipse Ballooning Project also involved students across the country, including several from Silverton, North Medford, and Tigard High Schools. Special high-altitude balloons equipped with cutting edge technology collected images and atmospheric measurements. See the results at [eclipsemega.movie](http://eclipsemega.movie).

The new Building on the Eclipse Education Program sponsored by Astronomers Without Borders has many hands-on STEM activities ([astronomerswithoutborders.org](http://astronomerswithoutborders.org)) for families, as does the American Astronomical Society ([eclipse.aas.org](http://eclipse.aas.org)) and the National Science Teachers Association ([nsta.org](http://nsta.org)). These excellent resources can help you to continue the conversation with your child about science and related topics long after the eclipse itself.

I hope families keep the eclipse learning momentum going while the celestial experience is still fresh. Who knows? Maybe this eclipse could be a defining moment for Oregon students.

I would love to see a sixth-grader at Oregon Connections Academy walk across the stage on graduation day seven years from now planning to major in astrophysics in college, just in time to chase the next total solar eclipse crossing over North America.

Dan Vasen, of Corbett, is an Oregon Connections Academy elementary school assistant principal. For information about the school or to reach Vasen, visit [www.OregonConnectionsAcademy.com](http://www.OregonConnectionsAcademy.com) or call 800-382-6010.

## Drug possession charge is eased

ANDREW SELSKY  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

A bill signed by Oregon Gov. Kate Brown on Aug. 15 makes personal-use possession of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and other drugs a misdemeanor, not a felony.

Oregon joined just a handful of other U.S. states in defelonizing drugs under the new law, which was supported by law enforcement groups and takes effect immediately.

Jo Meza, owner of Amazing Treatment, a rehab center in Salem, applauded the move. She has seen the damage caused by drug addiction in her 30 years in the field.

"There's a huge crisis out there, and locking people up is not going to work," Meza said.

Looking to kick their addictions, patients ascended a flight of stairs into Amazing Treatment, located above a Mexican restaurant and a barber shop in downtown Salem.

Inside the center, someone had drawn a syringe on a whiteboard with the words "No more." Above that was a quote by philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche: "Many are stubborn in pursuit of the path they have chosen, few in pursuit of the goal."

Meza said imprisoning first-time offenders with limited or non-existent treatment opportunities is not a solution. But the goal can be achieved with treatment for six months to a year with support from recovering addicts and training in how to remove oneself from the environment that led to the drug abuse, like a circle of addicted friends or relatives, she said.

Among the bill's supporters were the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police and the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association, which said felony convictions include unintended consequences, including barriers to housing and employment. But the two groups, in a letter to a state senator who backed the bill, said the new law "will only produce positive results if additional drug treatment resources accompany this change in policy."

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# In light of Whitewater Fire, some policies need changes



ROB FRERES

The fire near Mt. Jefferson began when a lightning-struck tree fell to the ground, igniting fuel on July 23.

As of Aug. 14, over 6,500 acres have burned both inside and outside of the Federally designated Wilderness area. Nearly \$12,000,000 has been spent on fire suppression since its inception.

Freres Timber, Inc. owns 1,400 acres within a mile of the fire. Strong east

winds could cause devastating damage to our timber. The U.S. Forest Service granted permission to remove "hazardous fuels" from our firebreak.

Freres personnel and our contractor's quickly jumped into action cutting a 75- to 100-foot firebreak along roads and property lines. Contractors Bob Ward and Cory Callsen made valiant efforts to protect this land. They worked as much as 32 consecutive hours on two separate occasions.

Ziglinski and Derrick cutting crews fell timber for nine hours per day. Siegmund Excavation & Construction used

their steep slope harvesting equipment and dozers to create fire lines. Freres road crew and Lulay Timber personnel ran additional dozers. Everyone worked in extreme heat and smoke.

There are too many heroes to recognize at this time. More than 100 log truck loads were shipped in three days; with loading beginning at 2 a.m. and trucks required to hit Highway 22 by 1 p.m. The Freres family extends its heartfelt gratitude to everyone who helped protect our timberland in this time of need.

Last week, I contacted Congressman Schrader and Walden, and Senator Wy-

den to express our view that firefighting policies in statutory wilderness areas need to be changed—all means necessary should be allowed to fight fires in wilderness areas to minimize the size and expense of future wildfires.

The Whitewater lightning strike occurred four weeks before firefighters were dispatched. The fire could have been addressed before it required the multimillion-dollar response that is ongoing.

Rob Freres is the executive vice president of Freres Lumber Company in Lyons.

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