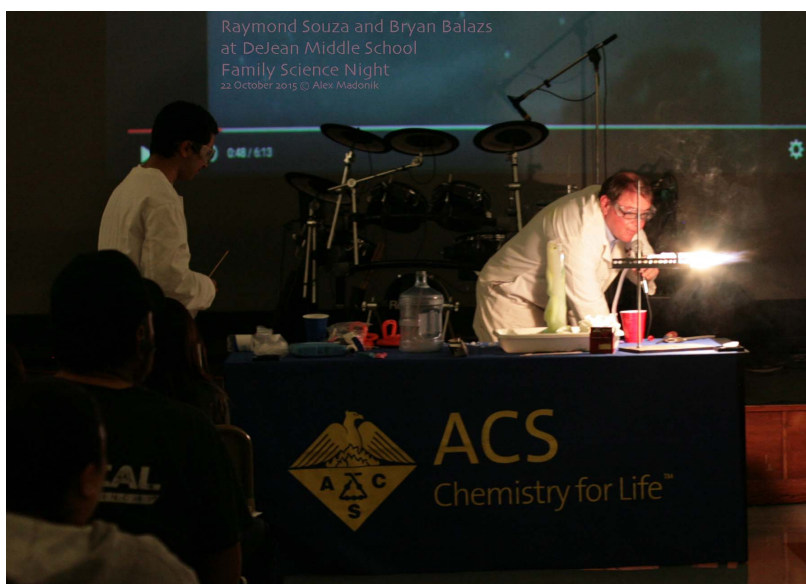


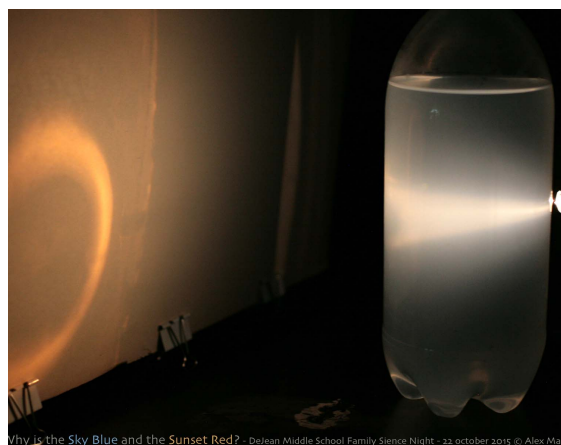
Family Science Night at DeJean Middle School, Richmond, CA – NCW 2015 Alex Madonik, NCW Coordinator

The California Section showed people up and down Northern California that “Chemistry Colors Our World” as we celebrated National Chemistry 2015 (October 18th to 24th). This year’s theme proved to be especially popular as teachers, students, and their families were eager to try the hands-on activities described in Celebrating Chemistry.

Following last year’s successful Family Science Night at Helms Middle School in San Pablo, Science Coach John Iwawaki was eager to invite us back to the West Contra Costa Unified School District. The result was two solid hours of entertainment and hands-on chemistry on Thursday, October 22nd, at DeJean Middle School in Richmond, as three dozen ACS volunteers presented a total of 16 different activities. The Scientific Jam band opened the show for the small but enthusiastic crowd, who were then delighted by the chemistry show presented by Bryan Balazs and his nephew (and experienced stagehand) Raymond Souza. Who can resist flames and rockets?



The show’s excitement carried over to the activity stations in the science building. For many, the first stops were the Chevron team’s ever-popular Slime station or Kent Campbell’s chemistry show, just across the hall. Further down, Section Chair Charlie Gluchowski guided budding geneticists as they extracted strawberry DNA. And, in the darkened classroom across the hall, visitors discovered, “Why Is the Sky Blue and the Sunset Red.” Find a small flashlight, add a few drops of milk to a glass of water, and try this one for yourself! Then, pull out an NCW diffraction grating slide and get a better look at the spectrum of your flashlight and the other lights in your world. In the same classroom, middle school teacher Margaret Elliott illuminated fluorescent bubbles with her black lights, and helped visitors explore UV-activated color-changing beads.



Upstairs, Janet Schunk used chromatography to help answer the question, “Is Black a Color?” while John Loughlin and Jeanne Pimentel presented Color-Changing Liquids. Red cabbage indicator revealed pH changes in Colorful Electrolysis (accompanied by bubbles of hydrogen or oxygen). Across the hall, Birgit Drews coached kids as they discovered the rules of DNA-RNA base pairing, and many left with helix decorations created by talented chemist and face-painter Emily Bloom. New volunteer Kris Pohlman guided visitors as they explored the many types of plastics used in packaging, identifying them by physical properties such as density and melting point, and learning about their reuse in products made from recycled materials. At the other end of the hall, young scientists discovered the chemical structures of plant aromas (terpenes) and colors (e.g. the anthocyanins of cabbage, fruits, and flowers). Margareta Séquin (San Francisco State University) and Walter Orellana (Contra Costa College) showed them how to build their own molecular models.



Family Science Night would not be complete without liquid nitrogen ice cream (special thanks to AirGas San Leandro for liquid nitrogen!), prepared under the direction of Lee Latimer and John Iwawaki and served by DeJean volunteers. My thanks to all of our volunteers and to DeJean Principal William McGee and WCCUSD Superintendent Bruce Harter for their warm welcome.