Cal ACS Outreach News – Fall 2019 – The Solano Stroll

When the Cal ACS Executive Committee convened in September, we were just back from a productive ACS National Meeting in San Diego, and the Solano Stroll was less than a week away. On Sunday, September 8th, Cal ACS volunteers were back at our usual booth location near the corner of Solano and Fresno Avenues, displaying the ACS – Chemistry for Life logo as well as our poster from the San Diego meeting, highlighting our 2018 efforts to promote STEM education at all levels, throughout our diverse communities.

Cal ACS Booth at the Solano Stroll – September 8th, 2019

Charles Lee (USDA WRRC) arrived early with a big folding table. Section Chair Greti Séquin and Secretary Michael Cheng were there to help me set up. Soon, visitors were building voltaic piles with the Build-a-Battery activity from NISEnet Let's Do Chemistry kit, a perfect match with the National Chemistry Week 2019 theme, "Marvelous Metals." Each pair of zinc-plated and copper washers produced around 0.90V, compared to the 0.76V difference between the potentials of zinc and hydrogen ion (provided by the vinegar electrolyte). Stacking four sets of washers gave us over 3.5V, plenty to activate the blue LED provided with the NISEnet kit.

Our booth also featured the ever-popular UV-color-changing beads, which kids of all ages fashioned into UV-detecting bracelets. In addition, no visitor left without a Periodic Table wallet card commemorating the 150th anniversary of Mendeleyev's original publication. Plus, the 2019 edition of Celebrating Chemistry features an interview with Stan Whittingham, one of three winners of the 2019 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his work on the lithium-ion battery.

Building and testing voltaic piles with the NISEnet Build-a-Battery kit.

Throughout the day, we were ably assisted by seasoned ACS outreach volunteers, including Marla DeKlotz, Michael Pinkerton, Linda Wraxall, and Emiko Yoshino. We collected 85 responses to our informal survey, “What’s Your Favorite Metal?” Copper won with 18% of the vote, closely followed by gold (15%) and platinum (11%).