

## **The Communicator – January 2012**

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### **Center 8200 shares holiday spirit with troops overseas**

For the second year in a row, Center 8200 collected donations for the Blue Star Moms at its team celebration in December. Members of the workforce brought in over 300 lbs of items such as batteries, puzzles, books, DVDs, blankets, socks, airline blankets, music CDs, hand warmers, toiletries, snacks, gum, tea, and hot chocolate mixes—things that might seem trivial in the comfort of your home but are precious to troops stationed overseas.

Before the holiday shutdown, Mary Fadhel Burton of Blue Star Moms and her husband Carl came to Sandia to collect the donations. “We really thank you,” she said. “This will probably fill about 40 care packages, which will go out with our Valentine’s Day delivery.”

Rachel Sowell (8200) came up with the idea last year. “My cousin had recently joined the Air Force,” she explains. “I feel it is important to recognize the men and women who make our freedom possible, especially during the holidays. We take for granted that they have family and friends ‘back home’ that send them care packages and letters. After speaking to my cousin, I learned that is not always the case.”

Blue Star Moms sends shipments of care packages to troops overseas three times a year—Christmas, Valentine’s Day, and July 4. These packages are sent to young men and women who aren’t receiving much mail from home; they are referred to the Blue Star Moms by Commanding Officers, chaplains, and soldiers in the field.

The organization often receives most of its donations in the fall, for the Christmas shipment, making it harder to fill boxes for Valentine’s Day. The timing of Sandia’s donation, says Blue Star Mom Janet Burchard who collected the 2011 contribution, is a great start.

Center 8200 also wrote personal “thank you” postcards to the troops, which the Blue Star Moms also collected. They will be mailed to the troops, separate from the care packages.

The Blue Star Moms accept donations of goods or cash year-round. To receive a list of suggested donations and to learn more about the organization, visit [www.bluestarmoms.org](http://www.bluestarmoms.org).



Tim Shepodd (8220) looks over the Center 8200's donations with Mary Fadhel Burton of Blue Star Moms and her husband Carl. (Photo by Dino Vournas)

### **Blake Simmons elected to AIMBE College of Fellows**

Blake Simmons (8630) has been elected to the College of Fellows for the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering (AIMBE). He and the other 106 inductees were nominated by their peers and screened by committees of Fellows within their specialty, and were finally elected by the full College as the official Class of 2012.

Blake was selected for his work on the *“development of sustainable technologies that provide low-energy routes for the biological production of fuels and chemicals.”* The College of Fellows is comprised of the top two percent of medical and biological engineers in the country. Engineering and medical school chairs, research directors, innovators, and successful entrepreneurs comprise the College of Fellows to fulfill AIMBE's mission of providing leadership and advocacy in medical and biological engineering for the advancement of society.

“The 107 inductees consist of some of the most talented and influential members of our field,” says Kenneth Lutchen, AIMBE President and Dean of Engineering at Boston University. “It is both a pleasure and an honor to welcome the Class of 2012 to our College of Fellows.”

Blake is the Senior Manager of Biofuels and Biomaterials Science and Technology and serves as the Biomass Program Leader for Sandia. He is also the Vice President of the Deconstruction Division at the DOE Joint BioEnergy Institute (JBEI). His JBEI team is working on novel hydrolytic enzymes and biomass pretreatments to liberate fermentable sugars from lignocellulosic biomass. He received his PhD in chemical engineering from Tulane University and his B.S. in chemical engineering from the University of Washington. He served six years in the U.S. Navy as a nuclear propulsion operator.

A formal induction ceremony will be held during AIMBE's 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Event at the Grand Hyatt in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 20, 2012. For more information about the AIMBE Annual Event, please visit [www.aimbe.org](http://www.aimbe.org).



### **Mike Waltz, Regina Brinker receive Excellence in Teaching Awards**

On Tuesday, Dec. 13, Sandia National Laboratories presented two local teachers with Excellence in Teaching Awards at the regular meeting of the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District's Board of Education. Mike Waltz, an engineering teacher at Livermore High School (LHS), and Regina Brinker, a science and technology teacher at Christensen Middle School (CMS), each received a \$500 award.

"The purpose of the Excellence in Teaching Award is to recognize teachers who foster a love of math, science, and technology in their students," says Stephanie Beasley (8529), Community Relations Officer for Sandia/California. "The STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering and math—are vital to Sandia's mission and our nation as a whole."

In his nomination form, Waltz is described as "a spectacular engineering instructor who encourages students to learn and enjoy all topics of engineering." He worked in the engineering profession prior to becoming a teacher. At LHS, Waltz is the lead teacher of the Green Engineering Academy, which has a special focus on at-risk youth. He also organized the LHS robotics team, which has competed in and won Robofest, and is advisor to the Engineering Club.

"Mike Waltz is the ideal combination of a practical engineer and enthusiastic teacher—exactly what students need to inspire them to participate in engineering careers," says Sue Johnston, chair of the LHS math department.

Brinker started the STEM Exploration program at CMS, which feeds into the LHS Green Engineering Academy. She was selected as one of the top 10% of educators from across the country to participate in the Fulbright Japan program, won a Brinker Prudential Award for

teaching excellence, has brought in grants totaling \$12,000, and was named CMS teacher of the year.

CMS principal Amy Robbins describes Brinker as “an amazing person, an educational leader, local community member, and dynamic educator.” She adds that “she is the utmost professional and always looks for ways to develop content, curriculum, and instructional strategies.”

In 2007 Sandia established an endowment with the Livermore Valley Education Foundation (LVEF) to fund the Excellence in Teaching Award, given to two outstanding teachers in December of each year. Principals and staff members can nominate teachers for the award, and parents and students are encouraged to submit suggestions to site principals. Selection is then made by a committee that includes representatives from LVEF, the Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, and Sandia. Nominations for the 2012 Excellence in Teaching Award will be accepted next fall.

Previous recipients are: Stefanie Erlwein, East Avenue Middle School; Nelson Fong, Livermore High School; Susan Johnston, Livermore High School; Elizabeth Lopez, Granada High School; Ravi Prabhala, East Avenue Middle School; Jennifer Profumo, Joe Michell K–8; Mary Martha Swanson, Rancho Las Positas Elementary School; and the team of Wendy Otvos, Sharon Abri, Erika Johnston, and Kerry Barger, Marilyn Avenue Elementary School.

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Regina Brinker



Mike Waltz

Daffodil Days 2012 is coming!

Daffodil Days is one of the American Cancer Society's oldest and most beloved fundraising programs. It provides hope to everyone touched by cancer by offering daffodils to donors in appreciation of their contributions. For more than 30 years, Daffodil Days has enabled people of all ages to join the Society's fight against cancer by raising funds to support groundbreaking cancer research, provide up-to-date cancer information and education, advocate for public health policies that benefit the community, and provide services that improve the quality of life for patients and their families. This is your opportunity to brighten and save lives in your community by participating in the ACS Daffodil Days campaign.

The campaign is will begin soon at Sandia. Through February 24, you can order the first flower of spring and/or make a Gift of Hope donation in the following ways:

- Bouquet of 10 gorgeous daffodils (\$10)
- Sunshine: Bouquet of 10 gorgeous daffodils in a half-liter clear glass carafe (\$20)
- Vision: Two bouquets to arrange as you wish in a clear, 6-inch glass vase (\$35)
- Gift of Hope donation of \$25, \$50, \$75, or \$100: Bouquets of daffodils are delivered anonymously by volunteers to cancer patients at medical centers and facilities in our community
- Bear of Hope: Comfort a pediatric cancer patient by sending a Bear of Hope. For a minimum donation of \$25, ACS will anonymously deliver limited-edition Boyds® by Enesco® bears to children in the community who are receiving cancer care.

Last year Sandia/California contributed nearly \$4,000. For more information about Daffodil Days and the American Cancer Society, go to <http://daffodil.acsevents.org/ca> or <http://www.cancer.org>