
News

Science Fair - 6th to 8th April 2000. Malta Chamber of Scientists

This is the second consecutive year that the Fair has been organised and its main aim is to demonstrate that in each of our daily activities Science impacts on the way we behave and make decisions. It will do so even more in the years to come - for example just imagine life without computers or for that matter the internet and the world wide web. A better understanding of the science and technology about us will improve our quality of life without having to become a professional scientist to enjoy its fruits.

The Science Fair in essence is also the composite of a number of activities that culminate with this specific event. The first of these is the Science Forum, organised by the NSTF and the Junior Chamber of Scientists, in which students from V and VI forms and 1st year University students, have debated topical issues in Science held over 5 sessions over the past months. The debates have been heated and have covered such topics as the use of Artificial Intelligence and the recent entry of genetically modified foods onto our menu. Sessions have also been illuminated by top scientists in the area

from the University and further afield through the kind sponsorship of the Italian Cultural Institute and the British Council. The winners of this debating series will in turn be rewarded for their efforts. They will travel to London, to join some 300 hundred or so other students from all over the world to take part in the London Science Forum.

The second event, that in turn was judged by local and international experts over the days of the Fair was the result of several months hard work that were displayed on the stands throughout the three days. These young aspiring scientists participated in our local young scientist of the year competition and the winner and runner up, Mr. Nicholai Sultana and Ms Anita Cardona will represent Malta in the EU young scientist of the year competition to be held in Amsterdam later on in September. This is the third time that we are taking part in such an event and by all accounts we have fared well on the previous two occasions that were hosted by Portugal and Greece, respectively. All the participating students whether in our local event or the international



Wendy and Mike Gluyas demonstrating the ability of a slinky spring to march down stairs to the tune of "Land of Hope and Glory". One of the many demonstrations during their interactive session entitled "Musical Squares". (Budding young scientists watching the demonstration)

contest remark that the experience is well worth it even though one at times seems to be on a roller coaster ride of frustrations and joys encountered on a voyage that ultimately is part and parcel of seeing a scientific project through to its end.

A Science fair in many ways would be incomplete without some hands on fun - the exhibits provided by the Malta Council for Science and Technology are based on some fundamental scientific concepts that have been brought to life by the students who have assembled them. These in many ways give some insight into the ways in which science is applied in our daily lives. The MSCT is also to organise a Science week in which it is envisaged that more of these exhibits will be on show accompanied by lectures demonstrating several scientific principles.

At this juncture it is rather pleasing to see that such organisations as NSTF, and the Junior Chamber of Scientists come together with the MCST and bring their unique know how to put together such events. I would hope that such occurrences may become the norm in the future.

Back to the Fair, over the three days students were able to enjoy the wonders of chemistry. To most, chemistry appears to be that dull subject in which one has to learn complicated structures and formulae - but during the Fair we had a true to life demonstration by two University chemists, namely, Dr. Henk Frey and Dr. Martin Erdtmann, of the wonderful way chemicals, some of which may be found in every Maltese kitchen, behave under specific circumstances. Most enjoyed the display of the novel way in which every day chemicals

may be combined to produce some wonderful effects such as "fireworks".

We were also pleased to have back with us, Mike and Wendy Gluyas, after their first baptism of fire in last year's edition. We all, students and adults alike, enjoyed your demonstration or more appropriately I should say - sound show - called "Musical Squares".

In addition, we were also privileged to have with us Professor Edward Mallia from the Physics Department at the University who enthralled the students with his understanding of the possible uses of solar energy - excluding sunbathing!! He also made it back up the hill in his solar powered cinque cento !!

All in all, it would appear that over the three days of the Fair there was something to excite most minds even those of the faint hearted. As is becoming very evident, over the next 10 years or so science is to become more important in our daily activities. If we want to enjoy the advantages of such it is imperative that we look at science as not that esoteric thing that some people do in laboratories out of the public eye, but knowledge to be used in improving our quality of life. It should in essence become part and parcel of our character like a duck taking to water or the young taking to computers.

The NSTF, the Malta Junior Chamber of Scientists and the MCST must be congratulated for their efforts in putting together an exciting couple of days. However, special thanks are due to Ms. Ruth Bajada, who without doubt has been heart and soul of this event.