

'Z-WAVE' LIVING MUSEUM MAKES BIG SPLASH AT SANTA MONICA COMMUNITY CENTER

On Feb. 13 the first-ever Z-Wave Living Museum was held at the Santa Monica (Calif.) Community Center. Z-Wave, a mentoring program for children ages 7–12, was conceived by Joe Newman with the goal of “instilling in our children a sense that the Mystic Law is absolute.”

Beginning in October 1999, every other Sunday Z-Wave’s 15 mentors and 30 kids met for gongyo and chanting, followed by Buddhist discussion. The mentors, who are SGI-USA members and professionals in the areas of cooking, performing arts, documentary filmmaking, gardening and the visual arts, then worked with the children in small groups.

The Living Museum displayed examples of what each mentor group learned. The kids in the Z-chef section, headed up by Mentor Chef Phillip Yi, prepared avocado rolls and miso soup for guests as they watched the “ZWTV” kids perform a hilarious show using the Buddhist concepts they studied. Written and acted by the children themselves, it was videotaped by another group called “Reel Z,” who learned how to make a documentary film and documented all the Z-Wave activities.

The community center was transformed that day by the “Wonder Garden” group, which worked steadily to beautify the new Z-Wave room and the grounds at the SMCC. They studied the wonders of science and chemical reactions, and had fun with a huge “bubble machine.” They also built a butterfly house, terrarium and coffee table.

One highlight of the afternoon was the unveiling of a huge mural designed and painted by the children in the “Art Part” of Z-Wave. The mural depicts a lotus pond with a beautiful flowering lotus blooming in the center of a muddy swamp filled with creatures.

Jameise Rozner, 10, said: “Today is very fun. I got to see what everybody else is doing. The mural is pretty! I worked on the sky, the fish, the roots of the lotus flower...the teachers are very good!”

Joe Newman looks forward to future Z-Wave activities: “What I learned is that you need to find a lot of different people of vision and unite them... Z-Wave unified a lot of ‘rebels’ who had their own vision.”

Many were already anticipating new Z-Wave adventures. Kyle Rachal commented: “My favorite part was the Clue Center...I’d like to do Z-Wave art next time.” Z-Wave will resume at the Santa Monica Community Center on April 30 and continue every other Sunday through Aug. 6.

Anyone interested in getting involved can email joe_newman@hotmail.com