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UCSC physicists part of international endeavor

# In search of ‘ultimate energy’

Group is set for a smashing good time at most powerful particle accelerator in world

By James Urton  
Staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A whole new world could be brewing in the Alpine border region between Switzerland and France, where physicists from UC Santa Cruz are working this year with an international team of scientists to smash subatomic particles and unlock the secrets of the universe.

The source of these smashing good times is the Large Hadron Collider, the



Haber



Seiden

world’s largest and most powerful particle accelerator. The 17-mile-long underground ring structure, built by the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and partner agen-

cies, took some time off for maintenance after the successful 2012 detection of the elusive but long-theorized Higgs boson — popularly dubbed the “God particle.” But as the collider revs up this spring, proton beams should approach the collider’s level of “ultimate energy,” producing collisions of greater intensity and energy.

“This is a new frontier,” said Jason Nielsen, a physicist with UC Santa Cruz.

Particle physicists from UC Santa Cruz have been at the forefront of these advancements, particularly with

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USC Dornsife/Los Angeles Times poll

# School testing wins support

55 percent of Latino voters say standardized exams improve California’s public education

By Zahira Torres  
Los Angeles Times

Latino voters consider California’s standardized tests an important measure of student growth and school performance, according to a new poll that shows the state’s largest minority group also feels strongly about teacher accountability and investing additional dollars in public education.

A majority of Latino voters, 55 percent, said mandatory exams improve public education in the state by gauging student progress and providing teachers with vital information. Nearly the same percentage of white voters said such exams are harmful because they force educators to narrow instruction and don’t account for different styles of learning.

The contrast between Latino and white voters offered by the USC Dornsife/Los Angeles Times poll also plays out in the frequency of testing in public schools. Only 23 percent of Latinos said students were tested too much, compared with 44

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## PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN BY THE NUMBERS

6 million	Total number in state
39 percent	Percentage of Latinos in Santa Clara County
38 percent	Percentage of Latinos in San Mateo County

## Four years of drought

# State’s agencies getting ready for busy fire season

Bay Area units hiring firefighters and reopening stations early

By Sharon Noguchi  
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Kept alive by a mild and dry winter, fire season never quite disappeared in California this year.

Now, fire agencies are readying for it to surge back, targeting a landscape baked dry in four years of drought. Starting inland and in the south and moving northward and toward the coast, Cal Fire’s ranks are swelling as the state fire agency steadily hires firefighters and reopens stations. In

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Andrew Hill High School

# Robotics team overcomes odds

Club still needs money to travel to world championship



PATRICK TEHAN/STAFF PHOTOS

Members of the Andrew Hill High School robotics club pack up their robot’s arms for shipping to St. Louis on Thursday. From left are: Christopher Sanchez, Nguyen Dang, Alfredo Diaz, and Guillermo Serrano.

By Sharon Noguchi  
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SAN JOSE — Amid a valley of high school robotics royalty, a struggling team from the East Side’s Andrew Hill High School is emerging as a Cinderella story. But it hasn’t made it to the robotics ball — yet.

It needs money to get there first — and needs it fast — after winning a ticket to the FIRST Robotics World Championship in St. Louis, scheduled for April 21-25.

A year ago, the team was scrambling to find advisers, members and space on campus, and lost half its robot-building season just trying to get permission to use power tools. The team persevered but finished the qualification rounds of the Silicon Valley FIRST Robotics regional competitions earlier this month in 55th place out of 58

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Tina Nguyen, a member of the Andrew Hill High School robotics club, signs a packing crate as the team prepares its robot for shipping at Santa Teresa High School on Thursday.

Petit Trianon Theatre

# San Jose Poetry Festival returns after eight-year hiatus

Some 100 writers attend event, which organizer hopes to expand in 2016

By Bruce Newman  
bnewman@mercurynews.com

SAN JOSE — A 9-foot Steinway concert grand piano holds pride of place on the main stage at the downtown Petit Trianon Theatre, but that majestic instrument gave way Sunday to the musicality pouring forth from participants in

the San Jose Poetry Festival.

Sonnets were beaten till their syllables bled, and the haiku was so on it went over your head. Sometimes there were rhymes using meter and verse, but no green eggs or ham, and limericks were worse.

After lunch, those who had drank deeply from the festival’s fount took an onomatopoeia break.

Then it was back on board the quatrain for a poetry slam, led by

Slam Master Scorpiana X, who declined to give her prose name. She declared herself thrilled to be part of the first San Jose Poetry Festival since 2007. “We definitely needed a festival,” Scorpiana said on the fly, “to bring the different poetry factions in San Jose together.”

Until the festival, it wasn’t widely known there were enough bards in the South Bay to have

See **POETRY**, Page 2



Scorpiana X reads one of her poems during a poetry slam session Sunday at the San Jose Poetry Festival at Petit Trianon Theatre.

KARL MONDON/STAFF

## ONLINE EXTRAS » EXPANDED FEATURES ON THE WEB

### No place like home (opener)

Follow the action as the Giants host the Rockies at AT&T Park at 1:35 p.m.

www.mercurynews.com/sports



DOUG DURAN/STAFF

### A bit of Disney for ‘Dancing’

See Jacqueline Oliverius’ online recap after tonight’s episode.

www.mercurynews.com/tv

### Can Warriors bear Grizzlies?

Follow in-game action as Golden State hosts Memphis at 7:30 p.m.

www.mercurynews.com/warriors



RAY CHAVEZ/STAFF

### Travel shots may win prize

Submit your photo in the Best of California travel contest.

www.mercurynews.com/travel-contest



Bay Area Extra

Be wary of baby wildlife in your trees

**DEAR JOAN:** Spring may feel like the proper time to neaten up your garden and prune your trees, but be careful. Wild animals are probably using those branches as a nursery.

Every day WildCare's wildlife hospital admits patients orphaned by tree



JOAN MORRIS  
ANIMAL LIFE

trimming and other gardening. Recently, a family of tiny Western gray squirrels plummeted to the

ground when the tree holding their nest was cut down. These babies were brought to the wildlife hospital two days later, dehydrated and very much in need of care. Fortunately, they are recovering in foster care and their prognosis is guarded but good.

In the weeks ahead, WildCare's bird room will also fill up with orphaned songbirds, many of which will have lost their homes and their parents' care when their nests were cut from branches.

WildCare's director of animal care, Melanie Piazza, says WildCare takes excellent care of the orphaned baby patients, but there is no question that it is best for them to remain in the care of their parents.

WildCare asks people to procrastinate when it comes to nonemergency tree work. Wait until resident animals have raised their broods, or even better, until nesting season is over in the fall.

Before cutting a tree, take a careful look to see if there are wild families already living there, and always call WildCare's 24-hour Living with Wildlife hotline at 415-456-7283 if you think there might be wildlife at risk.

**Alison Hermance**  
*WildCare spokeswoman*

**DEAR ALISON:** Excellent advice.

We are fortunate to have rescue and rehabilitation groups throughout the Bay Area. To find one close to your neighborhood, check out our list of groups at [www.mercurynews.com/pets-animals](http://www.mercurynews.com/pets-animals).

**DEAR JOAN:** We have a hummingbird nest with two eggs in it, but we haven't seen the mama bird in a few days. Is there anything we can do?

We had another nest in a different location and the mama would always be on the eggs or buzzing around if I got near. That one was successful, with two babies.

**Elizabeth Langer**  
*San Jose*

**DEAR ELIZABETH:** There is a chance that the mother hummingbird still is incubating the eggs and you just aren't seeing her. The female, who assumes full responsibility for sitting on the nest, can frequently leave it to search for food and water.

Experts say that hummers can leave the nest up to 110 times a day, with absences as short as a minute and as long as a half-hour. The eggs are fine during those times, but it does mean that hummingbird eggs take a little longer to incubate.

If the mother has indeed disappeared, there are a couple of explanations.

She may have been frightened off by a constant threat, she may have met with an accident, she may be a first-time mother who has not quite gotten the knack of motherhood, or the eggs may not be viable and after waiting a long time without any babies hatching, she has moved on to a new nest.

Despite our hearts urging us to "do something," it's best to leave it to nature. Hatching the eggs would be the easy part; trying to care for the babies would be difficult, and they would likely never be able to live in the wild, if they even survived.

*Contact Joan Morris at [jmorris@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:jmorris@bayareanewsgroup.com).*

Homicide seventh of year in San Jose

Fugitive in slaying arrested in Monterey

Man is suspected of shooting mother of three children

**By Sharon Noguchi**  
*snoguchi@mercurynews.com*

**SAN JOSE** — A fugitive suspected of shooting his girlfriend, then dumping her body on a San Jose street, has been arrested in Monterey, San Jose police said.

Monterey police arrested Andrew "Drew" Butler, 25, of Sacramento, on Saturday. He was booked into Santa Clara County Jail on suspicion of murder, police reported.

The death was the city's seventh homicide of the year: 11 had been recorded at the same point in 2014.

Police suspect Butler



SAN JOSE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Andrew Butler is suspected in the shooting death of a woman on Tuesday.

in the shooting death of Kendra Gonzales, 33, also of Sacramento. Police believe she was driving when she and Butler got into an argument Tuesday evening. At some point, Gonzales was shot. In the 1300 block of South Bas-

com Avenue, Butler allegedly jumped out of the passenger seat of the car, ran to the driver's side and pulled Gonzales' body onto the street. Police said he then told two passengers to get out of the car and to take Gonzales' 1-year-old daughter, who was also in the car, with them.

Butler reportedly fled in the car, which was found abandoned in Salinas.

Responding to a report at 9:55 p.m. of a person lying on the street, the San Jose Fire Department and paramedics sought to provide emergency aid, but pronounced Gonzales dead at the scene.

She was the mother of three children, two of whom were in the car at the time of the shooting, a

relative said. Gonzales was in San Jose to visit family, the relative added.

A GoFundMe page has been set up to help pay for funeral costs for Gonzales and to help support her children. More than \$4,700 had been donated by Sunday afternoon. To donate, go to [www.gofundme.com/rcmtqw](http://www.gofundme.com/rcmtqw).

Anyone with information about the case can call Detective Sergeant Pat Guire or Detective Jason Tanner of San Jose police at 408-277-5283. Those preferring to remain anonymous may either call the Crime Stoppers Tip Line, 408-947-7867, or go online to [svermestoppers.org](http://svermestoppers.org).

*Contact Sharon Noguchi at 408-271-3775.*

East Palo Alto violence

Man, 34, identified as fatal shooting victim

**By Sharon Noguchi**  
*snoguchi@mercurynews.com*

**EAST PALO ALTO** — Martin Lee Simon Jr., a 34-year-old East Palo Alto resident, has been identified as the victim who was fatally shot on the street Friday night by a gunman who fled.

The San Mateo County Coroner's Office this week-end identified Martin, who died in the 300 block of Wisteria Drive about 8 p.m. Friday.

East Palo Alto police, alerted by a gunshot locator, responded and found Simon lying on the street

and suffering from several gunshot wounds to his torso, police said.

Emergency responders provided medical treatment, but Simon was pronounced dead at the scene, police reported.

According to police, an

unidentified gunman approached Simon and had a brief conversation, then opened fire.

The assailant fled on foot and remains at large.

Anyone with information on the shooting may call East Palo Alto police at 650-853-8477; email the de-

San Jose

Corpse in field identified

Man was found near airport Friday

*Staff report*

**SAN JOSE** — A 59-year-old San Jose resident has been identified as the man whose dead body was found Friday in a field south of Mineta San Jose International Airport.

The Santa Clara County medical examiner identified him Sunday as Randy Rumbelt.

San Jose Police officers responded to a call at 5:44 p.m. Friday to an area near Hedding and Spring streets. Officers found a man who was unconscious and not breathing, police Sgt. Enrique Garcia said. He was pronounced dead at the scene but police are not investigating it as suspicious.

Scientists

*Continued from Page 1*

upgrades to sensors on the collider's massive ATLAS detector. When the beams of subatomic particles fire up, these new sensors will let scientists peer closer than ever before at the high-energy collisions and ask fundamental questions about the building blocks of our universe on a scale never before achieved.

UC Berkeley professor and ATLAS experiment duty spokeswoman Beate Heinemann said the UC Santa Cruz physicists have "been one of the most important groups on the ATLAS experiment," particularly regarding new sensors.

The Large Hadron Collider uses a complex series of magnets to steer beams of protons — billions of them — toward one another. They travel through the ring tunnel at speeds approaching the speed of light, said Abraham Seiden, a physicist at UC Santa Cruz. When they collide, they can bounce, shatter and alter one another in ways that generate new particles that interact in new ways. The collider contains an array of in-

struments to record and analyze these collisions and their byproducts. But since 2006, Seiden has led a U.S. research and development team of scientists from 44 institutions to propose and develop new instruments for the ATLAS detector.

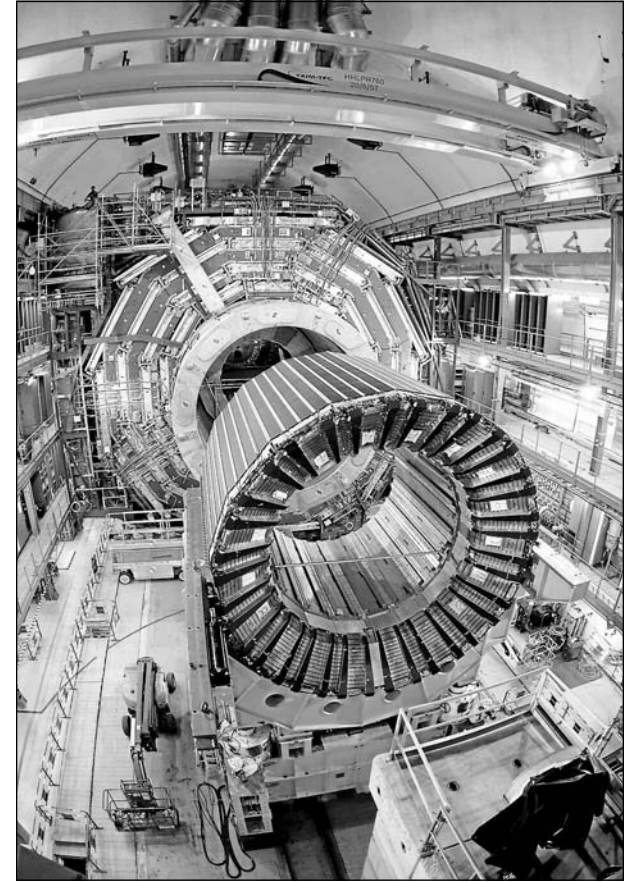
"The ATLAS detector is sort of like a cylindrical onion," explained Nielsen. "It has many layers of instruments."

New to the ATLAS onion this year is its innermost layer, a \$4.5 million instrument that will monitor proton collisions from a cozy distance of about 1.2 inches.

"It's basically made up of pixel sensors," explained Nielsen. "Like the pixels in your camera."

Scientists with CERN and partner institutions, including UC Santa Cruz, will operate the collider, maintain equipment and collect data from the proton beams around the clock, Nielsen said. CERN shares data with partner institutions around the globe.

The new instruments should gather more precise information about high-energy collisions. Physicists hope that over the next two or three years, the collider could explain what types of particles make up our cos-



MARTIAL TREZZINI/KEystone ARCHIVES

The magnet core of the world's largest superconducting solenoid magnet is shown in Geneva, Switzerland. Physicists from UC Santa Cruz are part of an international team that is working to extend the power of The Large Hadron Collider and unlock the secrets of the universe.

mos. One major mystery is the invisible substance that makes up over one-quarter of our universe, dark

matter. Ordinary matter, including the atoms that make up planet Earth and our bodies, make up less

Poll

*Continued from Page 1*

percent of white voters.

For Marianna Sanchez, who has six children in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, standardized testing offers the assurance that her children are learning the skills they need to pursue college and enter the workforce.

Sanchez, who has dyslexia, said frustration led her to drop out as she struggled to keep up in high school. The Fresno-area homemaker and her husband, a farmworker, want more for their children.

"They're testing them so we can know what they're learning, if they are learning anything, and if they're at the standards they need to be at to transfer eventually to a university," Sanchez said. "We want to know that they know what they're doing when they get there and if the teachers are actually teaching them what they need to be taught."

Latinos make up a majority of California's more

than 6 million public school children. In Santa Clara County, 39 percent of public schoolchildren are Latino; in San Mateo County, the percentage is 38 percent.

"As a mother, I want to know how my children are progressing," said Karen Martinez, of San Jose, who has seven children and sits on the Alum Rock Union School District board of trustees. Standardized testing provides information on what children have learned and where they stand. "If my child is growing at least a year, or a year and a half," Martinez said, "that's what matters to me."

She hears that from other parents in the largely Latino district. But, she said, "the reality is that tests are helpful, but aren't necessarily a clear gauge of growth." Many children test poorly, even when they know the subject. And tests aren't a comprehensive measure of learning.

"I'm hoping we can come up with better tools so we have a clear understanding of academic growth of individuals, of

children and also adults," Martinez said.

Nationally, standardized testing has come under increasing criticism from some lawmakers, parents and educators who argue that the mandated exams are excessive and siphon away time that should go toward instruction. Supporters say exams are necessary to assess student progress, teacher performance and measure the effectiveness of schools and districts.

Socioeconomic status contributes to opinions on standardized testing and attitudes toward public schools, according to a bipartisan team of pollsters. Latino voters who did not attend college favor such exams by 21 percentage points; 11 percentage points separate college-educated Latinos who believe the exams help from those who say they hurt public education.

"Once a family has achieved a certain level of financial success, they have the luxury of worrying about their children's stress levels," said Dan Schnur, head of the Uni-

versity of Southern California's Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics. "For families who haven't yet made it, they see the stress that comes with testing as an acceptable trade-off in order to more precisely measure progress."

Minorities have a stronger preference than white voters for providing additional financial support to schools and preserving teacher tenure, but the poll of 1,504 registered voters shows they also expect accountability.

Minorities agreed overwhelmingly with white voters that performance, not seniority, should be the most important factor in determining teacher layoffs during budget crises.

California's rules for laying off teachers are among the laws being challenged in a lawsuit, known as Vergara v. California, now on appeal. Martinez's daughter is among the nine plaintiffs.

Seniority also lagged behind a range of measures when voters were asked to prioritize options that could help determine teacher pay. Fewer than

than 5 percent.

"We know that dark matter cannot be made of ordinary matter," UC Santa Cruz physicist Stefano Profumo said. "There's no known particle that behaves the way dark matter behaves."

Scientists are also eager to learn more about the new particle in town, the Higgs boson.

"We have this very broad brush picture of the Higgs boson, but these were crude measurements," said UC Santa Cruz physicist Howard Haber. "When we restart the collider, there'll be higher energy and higher intensity beams, which means you produce more Higgs bosons."

Beyond the mystery of dark matter and a better snapshot of the Higgs boson, physicists believe these new high-energy collisions could produce particles that scientists have never predicted. Theoretical physicists have even suggested that through these collisions they might detect new dimensions, according to Profumo.

"That keeps me on the edge of my chair," he added.

*Contact James Urton at 408-920-5446.*

half of Asian voters and a slim majority, 53 percent, of white voters considered it significant for salary considerations. Nearly 70 percent of black and Latino voters said experience was an important factor.

Whereas a majority of voters support some form of teacher tenure, 45 percent of white voters do not believe educators should get that status at all, compared with 31 percent of Asian voters, 25 percent of Latinos and 17 percent of African-Americans.

Nearly half of voters surveyed said publicly funded, independently run charter schools offer a higher-quality education than traditional public schools. Still, a majority of white voters, 56 percent, believe the state should invest in improving existing schools instead of spending additional money to create more charters. Minority voters held on to that belief more strongly, with support between 67 percent and 69 percent.

*Staff writer Sharon Noguchi contributed to this report.*