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For Immediate Release

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Torrance Middle School Student Wins Essay Contest for El Camino College Space Science Day 2008

A Torrance middle school student won the annual essay contest sponsored by El Camino College's Space Science Day 2008. Richardson Middle School sixth-grader Kevin Spiekermann submitted the winning essay, which asked students to imagine themselves as an astronaut and explain their area of expertise in 150 words or less.

Kevin's essay follows:

Sunspots and Weather

Today I become an astronaut and travel into space. I feel very honored that NASA has chosen me. I am ecstatic that my hard work in school and college has paid off. I believe NASA has chosen me because of my incalculable knowledge about the weather. Someone once said that I could focus in a hurricane; therefore, I believe I could stay calm and overcome any problem that should arise while in space. My mission is to put four satellites in orbit around the Sun to observe and collect more data about sunspots. Sunspots are dark blotches on the Sun's surface thousands of miles wide that are believed to be linked to Earth's weather. Learning more about sunspots might enable us to predict weather farther in advance and with greater accuracy. This would help farmers be more productive and also save lives during storm disasters.

El Camino College's Space Science Day 2008 is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. April 19. This annual event features NASA Astronaut Tracy E. Caldwell as a guest speaker and is designed for South Bay youngsters to explore the science of outer space. It is free and open to serious-minded science students in grades five through 12.

Sponsored by El Camino College and American Honda Motor Co., Inc., and coordinated by the El Camino College Astronaut Ellison Onizuka Memorial Committee, the event is dedicated to Ellison Onizuka, a Space Shuttle *Challenger* astronaut who perished along with the six other crew members during the tragic events of 1986.

Astronaut Caldwell will address the students, offering insights about her educational and career path as well as details about her work with the space program.

After Caldwell's presentation, students at Space Science Day will join classroom activities and demonstrations led by El Camino College professors, Science FEST students, and guests from JPL and other institutions.

Students will participate in a variety of hands-on science activities and experiments, including the traditional Egg Drop Competition, where students attempt to build the perfect apparatus that will let an egg drop from a rooftop without breaking when it lands.

Reservations are required for the free science event. For more information, call 310-660-3487 or contact SpaceDay@elcamino.edu.

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