



By Judy Bedell

On June 7, President Obama named Paso Robles High School teacher Mark Fairbank for the prestigious Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching for California.

The Presidential Award for Excellence is the nation's highest honor for teachers of mathematics and science. The award recognizes outstanding k-12 teachers for their contributions in the classroom and to the profession. Winners of the award receive a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation to be used at their discretion. They also receive an all expenses paid trip to Washington, D. C. for an awards ceremony and several days

PRHS teacher Mark Fairbank receives Presidential Award for Excellence

of educational and celebratory events including visits with member of Congress and science agency leaders. Fairbank will also be invited to participate in discussions with policy-makers on how to improve mathematics and science education.

"I am beyond thrilled," said Paso Robles Public Schools Superintendent Kathleen McNamara, who originally encouraged Fairbank to undergo the rigorous application process. "When I read the criteria for the award, I thought, this is Mark Fairbank. His name immediately popped into my head," said McNamara. "Mark is a model teacher."

San Luis Obispo County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Julian Crocker said, "Mark's passion for science is equaled only by his commitment to help every student be successful. We have known that he is a 'Teacher of the Year' for a long time and it is great that others have now discovered him."

Fairbank has taught science at

Paso Robles High School for 26 years. He has taught biology, earth science, chemistry, physics, AP Chemistry and AP Physics. Prior to teaching in Paso Robles he taught at Elk Grove High School in Elk Grove, CA.

As a level-three technology mentor, he wrote and implemented a \$750,000 grant and taught many courses utilizing computer technology. He has presented at local, private and state workshops and conferences on topics ranging from DNA technology to teaching strategies to engage all learners.

Fairbank was honored and humbled by the announcement.

"I see education as this, it is the kids. It is not just about science, it is about the children. Yes, you have to know your subject matter, no doubt about it, but if we can make it entertaining and keep the focus on teaching the children, making those connections, that is what education is all about."

Former students of Fairbank know exactly why he was named Teacher of the Year. Whether it be

his physics lesson on walking on water at the Centennial Pool or the science demonstrations at Open House where potatoes are shot out of cannons and ice cream is made in an instant, science is entertaining. His use of interactive notebooks has also helped prepare countless numbers of students for the rigors of university level biology, physics and chemistry courses.

The Fairbank family has lived in Paso Robles for 26 years. His wife, Jane, is the principal at Trinity Lutheran School. His eldest daughter, Kerri, is a speech and language therapist in Moorpark. Middle daughter, Sharon, is completing her master's in physiology at San Francisco State after obtaining a teaching credential in health and physical education. Youngest daughter, Erica, is majoring in Child Development at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and will earn her teaching credential next year.

Congratulations, Mr. Fairbank. You make Paso Robles proud!