

Solar Effort Gains Steam



Roy Heine at home with his solar panels. Photo courtesy of Suntek Industries

About 30 people attended a January 5 open house at the home of the San Juan Capistrano residents Roy and Holly Heine to see the Heines' solar-electric system, which powers their entire house. Roy Heine is the CEO of Suntek Industries, a solar engineering firm with six offices in California and Nevada. "I have been in the solar industry since 1978, and our solar tour was the first for me in all these years," Heine said. "So much of my focus has been growing our business in the state of California;

it was so nice to move my efforts into my hometown and backyard."

A grassroots effort is pushing for more solar-powered homes in town. Find out more about solar at www.suntreksolar.com. Another company, Solar City will give a community solar presentation at the Chapel at Rancho Capistrano, 29251 Camino Capistrano at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, January 16. Information at 888-SOL-CITY or www.solarcity.com/events. Also, see www.lightgreenoc.com. —JV

JENNIFER CONNELLAN: Future Focused Exam Panic!



Deer in headlights. This is the closest description to the look I've been seeing on the faces of many of my high school students this week. Why? Because they are realizing that there are only two weeks before semester exams. Two weeks to bring their grades up in the classes they are worried about. Two weeks to prepare for the comprehensive exams they have in most of their classes.

This is when the scramble begins. This is when students realize there is no more time for procrastination; they need to do something. The problem? Many students don't know where to begin. The amount of material overwhelms them, and they have no idea when or how to start studying. Or, they completely underestimate the amount of study time involved and think they can learn it all in one night. If I ask 10 students how long they think they would need to study for a biology exam that covers eight chapters, I get answers ranging from 45 minutes to 12 hours. (Not surprisingly, the 45 minute answer normally comes from the D student and the 12 hours answer

comes from the A student.)

Albeit frustrating, this is all perfectly normal from the adolescent brain development perspective. The executive functions of the brain (higher reasoning, planning, judgment, etc.) are still developing. This means that adolescents are still learning the ability to plan ahead and connect what is going on now with what will happen in the future. Their skills in time management and strategizing are not fully actualized yet. Therefore, comprehensive semester exams are the ultimate test (no pun intended) of their developing brains.

It is our job as professionals and parents to facilitate their development. We need to help them build the bridge between the present and the future. Semester exams are actually the perfect exercise in planning and preparation, but students definitely need a little guidance and instruction to get started. Here are the basic steps we can help them take to formulate a concrete study plan:

1. Figure out what their grades are now and have them set realistic goals for the end of the semester. This will help them figure out exactly what they need to get on each exam to reach their goal grades.

LAURA FREESE: Only in San Juan Imagine What Our Downtown Could Be...



In this article, and my next few articles, I would like you to join me on a virtual walking tour of our downtown. Let's visualize together what our fair city could look like; what it could be.

Today we start at the Mission. It is our crown jewel and the heart of the city. As with any precious jewel, the setting must be almost as beautiful and perfect as the gem to show it off properly. If our gem's setting is lackluster, it will never properly reflect the light of its real beauty. So, let's begin our walk here.

Visualize a pedestrian plaza. Not a grand plaza, but the type of plaza that is the center of a beautiful Spanish or Mediterranean town. Visualize the plaza covered with stone pavers or cobblestone. A large graceful, cooling fountain would be in the center of the plaza, with the sides high enough for a person to sit and have their photograph taken with the historic Mission in the background. There would be trees and flowers in different sections of the plaza, adding soothing comfort for the eye and soul. Tables with coffee drinkers and diners would border the plaza, just as one might see in Rome. Maybe, in the evening, the trees would have soft lighting in their limbs or possibly shining up from the ground, setting the mood for an evening stroll or a late night glass of wine.

This plaza would be where Ortega Highway is currently, between

Camino Capistrano and El Camino Real. The traffic would be diverted, and, yes, this can be and should be done. The design of a new interchange at Interstate 5 and Ortega Highway affords us this fabulous opportunity to redesign and redirect our traffic patterns. Most of the historic structures of the world are presented and protected by beautiful pedestrian plazas. All of these cities wisely understood that replacing car and truck traffic with pedestrians would help preserve their precious gift.

If we make the choice to have our city properly display the jewel with which we were blessed, then San Juan Capistrano, too, will be on the map as one of the beautiful places in the world. If we make our Mission area and our downtown more attractive, more welcoming and comfortable, then it will attract the types of shops, hotels and visitors we want to attract.

Our city's strength is our Mission and our history. We should be playing to our strengths. We cannot afford a laissez faire attitude or the most important and precious parts of our town will slowly fade away. It cannot be just a dream or a wish; it is an imperative. We must move forward to "preserve the past to enhance the future." Isn't that our city motto? We must make this happen. We can make this happen.

Laura Freese is a San Juan Capistrano business owner and sits on the Chamber of Commerce board of directors. ■

2. Assist them in prioritizing their classes from hardest to easiest. Have them write down exactly what will be covered on each exam on a single piece of paper. Then, next to each class, estimate how many total hours they think it will take to study for the exam in order to get the grade they want to get. The hardest classes will obviously require the greatest amount of study time.

3. Develop a study schedule. When I work with students, I have them create this schedule very specifically, hour by hour. Make sure they block out the times they will be at a sports practice, family gathering, doctor's appointments, etc. Then, start plugging in their study hours. Since they are planning ahead (two weeks in advance of the tests), they should be able to avoid long cramming sessions the night before the test. The hours they

need to study should be evenly spread out. Emphasize with them that the night before the exam should really only be to review what they already studied.

For this plan to be successful, the students need to take ownership over it. They will resist following a schedule that is set out for them by someone else. But if they create their own schedule, they will be more likely to follow it and more likely to learn more from the process. Then maybe next semester, we won't see that "deer in headlights" look on their faces.

Jennifer Connellan is the co-founder and president of local San Juan business, Future Focused, which offers college counseling, tutoring and academic coaching for students in Orange County. Contact her at Jennifer@futurefocused.com or 949.276.4077. ■