

SESF TechTest2007 (by John McDaniel)

This morning (May 25th) Tofanelli's was the site of the Sierra Environmental Studies Foundation TechTest2007 Honors Breakfast. It was attended by the competitors who took the grueling four-hour exam last month in the NUHS Don Baggett Theater. The twelve participating students represent the cream of Nevada County's high school seniors (and one junior) headed for degrees in the math-science field. In attendance also were the competitors' properly proud parents, the proctors – NUHS educators Cathy Peterson, Teri Kopp, and Lynn McDaniel - who administered the exam, the SESF board members, guests, and me. As a physics teacher at NUHS, I had the good fortune of heading the academic committee that wrote and graded the exam.

Dr. George Rebane, SESF Executive Director, welcomed everyone and congratulated the students and their parents. He then gave some background on the exam – most were surprised and relieved to hear that it was designed to yield top scores in the 50% range, “to let the eagles soar” as he put it – and then went on to remind all that these young people and their peers would become the “wealth generators” who will make possible an ever more accessible good life in a cleaner environment over the coming decades.

Then my brother Michael McDaniel, who is on the SESF board, took the floor to hand out ‘TechTest2007 Survivor’ T-shirts to the scholars and, in random order, announce that Christine Rice of Nevada Union High School, Jonathan Hyland of Nevada Union High School, and Kevin Palmer of Truckee High School were the top scoring seniors who would receive scholarships of \$3,000, \$1,500, and \$500 during the ceremonies of Awards Night on June 6th.

As a teacher I am happy to be involved in this program to recognize and financially support students willing to make the extra effort to go into careers critical to the future well-being of our country. We intend to make the annual TechTest a regular and welcomed feature on Nevada County's educational landscape, an addition that will fill a void in the academic areas we have traditionally celebrated in this community. SESF, a non-profit 501c3 organization run by volunteers (<http://sesfoundation.org>), also informed us this morning that with current incoming pledges the scholarship pool for TechTest2008 will exceed \$10,000 which will make possible more and larger awards. These donations will come from individuals and Nevada County businesses that understand the importance of motivating and encouraging young people to take on the challenges of a technical career.

John McDaniel is the Physical teacher at Nevada Union High School. He has an MBA in engineering, and was awarded the 2007 Nevada County Teacher of the Year. He is a 6th generation Nevada County resident.