

The Mother Of All Big Truck Events For Tulsa Kids: Touch – A – Truck Event To Supersize Martin Regional Library



EVENT PREVIEW/ NEWS ANALYSIS

By Ray Pearcey

Some of the keenest observers of public education in America feels that there is a gigantic gap between the kinetic, learning packed real world and what goes on in the overwhelming majority of U.S. K-12 classrooms.

They believe, with very inventive academic researchers/practitioners like MIT's Seymour Papert and his "constructionist movement", that American kids are not fully motivated because they often can't see the visceral, living connection between dry, often abstract instruction and the world of rockets, hospitals, spaceships, factories, robots and computers they see in media and sometimes on the ground.

I got a lot of my early education by playing around with stuff directly – including machines: I once got into an enormous amount of trouble with my mother, because I took apart a travel clock and got radium all over my hands and have to be taken to the hospital: I just wanted to see why the clock glowed in the dark.

Another part of the challenge is the need to help kids craft the creative/problem solving skills at the core of the novel intellectual

challenges that ignites America's most important public policy, scientific and business enterprises. A quick scan of the bios of some of the most important figures in American science, industry and government reveals a cadre of folks who got their hands dirty early on as children – mucking around with machines, computers, plants and animals, and the mathematics that give us strangely powerful insight into how all of these things work. And while conventional classroom instruction and even video games and computer simulations can give kids grand insight into some of this material, there is no substitute for touching a truck, playing with a small intricate machine, sitting in an airplane cockpit or seeing the giant machines that firefighters use to do their stuff.

There are a number of incredibly important initiatives that go to realigning kids with the real world in the Tulsa Public School system -- some have been underway for years: critical trial efforts at McLean High School, over last half decade – including their aviation and flight, biomed, and urban agricultural offerings, are in this category. And the science/pre-engineering treads for little kids at Mayo Demonstration School are in this exciting category as well.

Now

Apropos, the top notch, always adventurous Tulsa Library staff has convened a Big Truck Day/on the ground exploratorium for

kids. Some readers may know there is a revolution in library science and then the work real world librarians do. Part of the tumult comes about as a consequence the striking transformation in computing and digital media – another part flows from the need to get adults and kids alike back in the habit of using libraries and real and digital books and other learning and info resources on a regular basis apart from school requirements. But this dual revolution is also about profoundly rethinking the role of public library's in our society.

This is tough challenge for library and educational – professionals. It entails doing a lot of imaginative outreach work, making resources like computer workstations and 3-D printing machines available at public libraries and a host of other things: the Tulsa City County Library system is arguably in the front ranks of this effort and it is guided by a host of wonderful talents including Gary Shaffer, the Chief Executive Officer, and staff/library professionals like John Fancher, Marie Welden, Laura Raphael, and Keith Jemison. There's no better evidence of how the Library system here is handling the challenge than an extraordinarily inventive event which happens on August 2 – an event for kids of every variety, their parents, and overgrown children – like yours truly.

In a recent news release, the senior Tulsa library staff invited families to explore and discover dozens of big trucks, automobiles, trains, planes and a helicopter, during

"Touch-A-Truck" at Tulsa City-County Library's Martin Regional Library, 2601 S. Garnett Road, -- they say they will transform the parking lot into a child's perfect playground, Aug. 2, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

"Touch-A-Truck is an exciting and hands-on family event," said Marie Welden, Martin Regional Library's children's area supervisor. "It's a great opportunity for children of all ages to see familiar and maybe some not familiar vehicles up close. They can touch, explore and perhaps sit in the driver's seat of vehicles they see every day."

Participating organizations include PSO/AEP, Tulsa Fire Department, Tulsa Police Department, EMSA, Green Country Ultra Sport Flyers, Ice Cream on Wheels, Tulsa Garden Railroad Club, News on 6, Tulsa's Channel 8, Police Explorers Club, Shredders Inc., Shriners and Tulsa RV Sales. John Dellavadova will provide family music during the program to keep toes tapping as families view the vehicles.

"Touch-A-Truck" is sponsored by Flint Family Foundation and Tulsa City-County Library, with additional support provided by the Mary K. Chapman Foundation and George Kaiser Family Foundation.

For more information on Tulsa City-County Library programming, call the AskUs Hotline, 918-549-7323, or visit the library's website, www.tulsalibrary.org.