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FamilyHealth

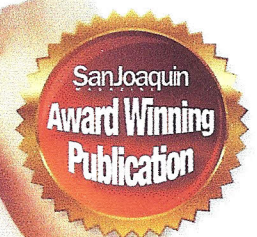
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In the Spotlight: Fred Speer

Bug Zoo

by Katy Berry

Looking to give your kids a fun, hands-on learning experience? Bug lover and collector Fred Speer has been working with Clark Pest Control to start the traveling Bug Zoo, visiting schools, scout troops, and educational clubs all over San Joaquin.

Speer began his exotic collection of insects three years ago when he set out to overcome his arachnophobia by purchasing a tarantula. "I work for a pest control company so people must think, 'How could you be afraid of a spider?' Well, I was."

Speer says that unpacking the creepy-crawly was intense, but he began handling the tarantula immediately despite his nerves. Today he has five or six spiders that he handles regularly, as well as some poisonous varieties that stay confined.

"I guess you could say I'm a big kid. My office is bookcase after bookcase with different tarantulas, scorpions, and roaches from around the world. At home my wife is ready to kill me," he laughs.

Speer pitched his Bug Zoo concept to Clark Pest Control soon after his initial purchase. "Why not reach out to schools and show them a different side of pest control? Not all of us are into killing bugs."

Speer continued to build his collection and fine tune his curriculum until he was finally able to begin the program last summer. His presentation is designed for grades three through six, and encourages kids not to be afraid of insects. "I try to stay away from 'If you see this kill it'. I say, let your parents know and let them handle it. If you see a tarantula, look at it from a distance. It's the same thing with scorpions. We have thirty different species in California alone. Look from a distance but do not disturb."

The kids rotate through different bug stations, sing songs, make crafts, and of course, Speer allows the kids to gather in a circle to meet a few of his crawly creatures in person, like his Giant African millipede or his Madagascar hissing cockroaches. "I show them the cool bugs you don't get to see every day, and basically teach them junior entomology." At the end of the program, kids head home with bug tattoos and coloring and activity books to share the experience with their family.



To learn more about Bug Zoo, call (866) 513-4268 or visit www.clarkpest.com.

