**DISCOVER Dr Deborah Boroch Science Discovery Day! Episode 157**

00:00:00 **Dr. Cindy**

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00:00:12 **Dr. Cindy**

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00:00:33 **Christina**

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

00:00:35 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:00:39 **Christina**

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

00:00:55 **Sun**

We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

00:00:59 **Speaker 1**

And I know I'm going to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

00:01:04 **Speaker 2**

She is a sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly, Pomona. Psychology major, English major ...

00:01:10 **Sun**

From transforming part-time into full-time-

00:01:14 **Speaker 1**

I really liked the time that we spent with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

00:01:20 **Christina**

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

00:01:23 **Speaker 1**

To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

00:01:25 **Christina**

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC, but most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni and producer of this podcast

00:01:37 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

00:01:42 **Christina**

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:01:46 **Sun**

Welcome back to the Magic Mountie Podcast. This is your host, Sun Ezzell. This year, the Natural Sciences Division hosted the 10th annual Mt. SAC Discovery Science Day for area fifth, sixth, and seventh graders and their parents.

00:02:00 **Sun**

In today's episode, podcast host, Tania Anders talks with biology professor, Dr. Cindy Shannon about Science Discovery Day, sparking a love of math and science in children, and the inspiration for Debbie Day, Dr. Deborah Boroch. Enjoy!

00:02:19 **Tania**

Welcome to the Magic Mountie Podcast. My name is Tania Anders, your host for today's episode. My guest is Cindy Shannon, professor of biology. She will share with us a very special project dear to her heart, which celebrated its 10th anniversary this spring, the Debbie Boroch Science Discovery Day, hosted by the Natural Sciences Division.

00:02:41 **Tania**

Hi Cindy!

00:02:43 **Dr. Cindy**

Hi.

00:02:43 **Tania**

Thank you for being here. How are you?

00:02:46 **Dr. Cindy**

I'm great. Thank you for having me.

00:02:48 **Tania**

Of course. I'm excited to have you here. So, maybe first off, could you please introduce yourself to our listeners?

00:02:57 **Dr. Cindy**

So, I am Dr. Cindy Shannon. I have been teaching in the biology department at Mt. SAC for the last 32 years, and I teach mostly field biology and majors biology.

00:03:09 **Tania**

Thank you. And of course, we're here to talk about the Debbie Boroch Science Discovery Day. So, I was hoping that you could also introduce Debbie to us because a number of our listeners might not have ever had the opportunity to meet Debbie. Like me, for example, I started at Mt. SAC after Debbie had been here. So, maybe you can tell us a little bit about Debbie.

00:03:35 **Dr. Cindy**

Absolutely. So, Debbie was a professional and a great friend at the same time. When I first came to Mt. SAC, she was teaching in the Biology Department. She used to teach anatomy and at that time, they were dissecting cats and she would wear a lab coat that said, "I love my cat " because she had cats.

00:03:55 **Dr. Cindy**

And so, she just had that kind of a sense of humor, but also, personality that went over well, very well with the students. And she did go ahead then and become the Associate Dean of Natural Science Division and eventually, ended up being the Dean of Instruction for the entire college.

00:04:14 **Dr. Cindy**

So, she was a professional. She did a lot to get the science complex that we all teach in. Now, we call them building 60, 61, and 7. So, she was kind of a mover and a shaker. She would make things happen, and she was always willing to listen to whatever your idea was, and see if there was a possible way to do that. And at the same time, she really enjoyed the environment and she was an avid scuba diver.

00:04:38 **Tania**

Wow, what an amazing person. And so, what happened then that made you come up with this idea for the Debbie Boroch Science Discovery Day? What motivated you to create this event for our campus?

00:04:56 **Dr. Cindy**

Well, I knew that I would always remember Debbie, but I wanted everyone to remember Debbie. And so, I was trying to think of a way to do that. And at the time, I was a director of the Mt. SAC Teacher Preparation Institute, and trying to think of ways to get our Mt. SAC students in contact with the population they would teach, and it would be elementary school or something like that.

00:05:18 **Dr. Cindy**

And at that time, I went to my husband's college, El Camino College on Onizuka Space Science Day that they do. And this is a day where they have elementary school kids come and learn about science and math. It's all based on space because it's in honor of an astronaut and remembering him.

00:05:36 **Dr. Cindy**

But I thought, well, we could tweak this and make Debbie Day. And I approached the Natural Science Division Dean at the time, Larry Redinger, and my Dean for Teacher Preparation Institute, Jim Jenkins, and they were all in for starting Debbie Day.

00:05:52 **Tania**

So, we lost Debbie way too young. When was this? What year?

00:05:58 **Dr. Cindy**

So, she passed away in 2009.

00:06:01 **Tania**

2009, okay. And so, when did we then host our first Debbie Boroch Day?

00:06:08 **Dr. Cindy**

It was a year later, took me about a year to get things rolling.

00:06:12 **Tania**

And so, what is the Debbie Boroch Science Discovery Day then all about? What does a typical Debbie Day look like? Which departments, for example, are part of this event? And I know we have different themes that run through it. Maybe you can share a little bit for our listeners who have not had the opportunity to go themselves or to volunteer some of their time or take their children to this event.

00:06:38 **Dr. Cindy**

Yes, absolutely. So, and this is, as you just said, for the children and their parents, we welcome the parents to attend with their kids. So, typically, the kids would sign up ahead of time because they get usually a free t-shirt and lunch, and maybe some other kind of swag that goes along with the theme of the day.

00:06:57 **Dr. Cindy**

And our departments that participate are biology, earth science, math, animal science, horticulture, chemistry, and the planetarium. After the first Debbie Day, which that theme was water is life, we formed a committee with our Dean and Associate Dean of Natural Science Division, and then representatives from all of those different departments.

00:07:25 **Dr. Cindy**

And in addition to the water is life theme, the second year, we did surviving with science, how to survive a natural disaster by using science and math. And CSI Mt. SAC, crime scene investigation, and Space Mt. SAC and sustainability. And then this year, we did the Earth Week. We ended earth week with Debbie Day.

00:07:49 **Tania**

Well, that sounds so fun and amazing. And for my department, I know I've been part of Debbie Day since I started here in 2015. So, my colleague Hillary and I, we have teamed up and I've teamed up with others. And so, it's really, really fun to see our whole division come together for this day.

00:08:10 **Tania**

Since you've been at all of these, and we were of course, super excited to bring Debbie Day back this year after we couldn't host it because of COVID for, I guess, two years. Was it two years?

00:08:24 **Dr. Cindy**

Yes.

00:08:24 **Tania**

We couldn't host it, yeah. So, hence our delay in the 10th anniversary, which happened now. And so, I'm sure you had over those 10 events, some special and favorite moments. Can you maybe share some with us? Some of the kids' reactions or learning moments or with your colleagues?

00:08:48 **Dr. Cindy**

I have memories of all of those things that you just listed. Yeah, I would probably start with the kids that attend because it's really great to see their expressions and their understanding, and the sort of the light bulb go off. And maybe just them having fun learning with science and math. Maybe they weren't aware that it could be fun.

00:09:08 **Dr. Cindy**

I have a favorite keepsake picture that I took a picture of a little girl's notebook at the beginning of the event. And she had drawn a picture of Debbie off of the program, and she was making a list of all the facts she was going to learn. And number one was Debbie has imagination because of all the things we had said about Debbie, and then all the rest were blank. She was going to fill that in the rest of the day.

00:09:33 **Dr. Cindy**

Because then after we do like a welcome and a keynote, we would send all the kids off to their breakout sessions and that's where they would go to the different departments. And that's another one of my favorite things. I mean, sometimes I don't see some of these other people in my division other than on Debbie Day. And so, it's really nice to be able to see them at committee meetings for Debbie Day and to see them on the day of the event.

00:09:58 **Dr. Cindy**

I really like watching my Mt. SAC students interact with the kids that attend. I think it's really valuable to them. It's a really great experience for them. And the keynotes, I think, that we've had have been really great over the years. I think my two favorites were the surviving with science, Wayne Bennett, who does survivalskills.com.

00:10:19 **Dr. Cindy**

But I think my favorite was our CSI Mt. SAC crime scene investigation, the forensic entomologist for Southern California that told us about how they date when, you know, when someone became dead, they used the insects to do that. They use the science of entomology to date that.

00:10:39 **Dr. Cindy**

And so, he's just an entertaining kind of guy. Plus, he has a really amazing job. And so, that would probably be my favorite keynote.

00:10:49 **Tania**

I'm waiting for that topic to come around again. That was before I was there, because I think the idea is to have these themes kind of rotate, right?

00:10:58 **Dr. Cindy**

Yes.

00:10:58 **Tania**

Because it's limited to an age group of fourth through seventh grade, right? I believe.

00:11:04 **Dr. Cindy**

Yes.

00:11:04 **Tania**

And so, kids rotate through as they get older. And so, we can certainly rotate through these topics or add new ones, like you shared earlier, we had Earth Day for our theme this year, but yeah, I'm kind of really hoping for that topic with the CSI to come back because that does sound so, so fun and amazing.

00:11:26 **Tania**

I agree also with what you said with our students, it's an opportunity for them to engage with the science that they're interested in, but also. With children. Like I usually try to recruit some of my students to help volunteer for my activities, and usually, it's those that are in the field of education or those who want to become educators that are like, "Oh yeah, I really want to do this." And so, it's a great opportunity to give them that experience.

00:12:00 **Tania**

So, I wanted to ask also, because if I'm not mistaken, you are going to be retiring in the near future. And so, if people would like to become part of Debbie Day and contribute to Debbie Day, who should they be in touch with? And what is the future of Debbie Day?

00:12:20 **Dr. Cindy**

If they wanted to contribute money, if they wanted to do a donation for Debbie Day, then that would be the director of Mt. SAC Foundation. That would be Bill Lambert.

00:12:31 **Dr. Cindy**

We do have two Biology Department members that stepped up at our last department meeting and offered to continue the tradition of Debbie Day and be in charge. And that is Maura Palacios Mejia, the person who was our speaker after me at Earth week, she runs our community garden. And also, Tyler Flisik, who was also at Debbie Day. And he is one of the co-directors of the wildlife sanctuary.

00:12:56 **Dr. Cindy**

So, they are new faculty. They're going to be here a long time and they enjoyed the event, and I was very happy that they asked if they could voice their interest and said they would like to take over Debbie Day.

00:13:11 **Tania**

Yeah, that's wonderful. And I wanted to - maybe you can share a little bit also what kind of activities the faculty members put together so that some of our listeners who have children in that age group, they might get intrigued to bring their children.

00:13:27 **Tania**

I know that when I'm there at the opening and I see some of the colleagues from across campus with their children, it's so fun. And I know that because I usually run my own breakout, I can't walk around, but certainly, it's very hard to compete with eating insects for example or the water balloons. But so can you share maybe a little bit what are some traditional activities that our faculty in the Natural Sciences offer?

00:13:56 **Dr. Cindy**

Sure. Yeah, in the area of biology up until this year, because of COVID, we did have edible insects. My husband is an entomologist and he learned how to cook insects and they taste like potato chips. Like you don't even know that they're insects, and he does all different kinds of flavors. He has pizza seasoning, he has Indian flavor seasoning. He does all these different seasonings.

00:14:19 **Dr. Cindy**

So, even our Dean of Natural Science Division ate a mealworm at one of our events. But like in animal science, and most of these activities are going to be tied into the theme. And so, in animal science though, they always seem to have some kind of animal there, of course.

00:14:36 **Dr. Cindy**

And usually, it's the seeing eye dogs because they have a connection with Guide Dogs of America. And so, this past event, they did some teaching with the kids about ways to have seeing-eye dogs help out people who need it and use less electricity to do it.

00:14:55 **Dr. Cindy**

And so, they had some of the kids learning how to like have the dogs lead them around. They had these black-out glasses where they could be the blind person and see how it feels to be that person. And they're also, they were kind of doing a little bit of an advertisement because they're always looking for people to raise puppies, to be guide dogs. And so, who doesn't want a puppy?

00:15:14 **Dr. Cindy**

Another biology one that Virginia Pasco does is the secret of plants. She makes all different things from soap to a little sachet I got that my daughter made at her event that I put in with soaking my feet. So, there's all ... chapstick, there's all different kinds of cool things they make.

00:15:32 **Dr. Cindy**

Chemistry was looking at how to clean water. We had your event with the big blue-green and the other earth science with the weather. And Brian Scott was taking people around from horticulture on a tour around the campus to look at bugs on the plants. And so, they got this huge tour.

00:15:50 **Tania**

Oh, how fun. And we usually also have a tour of the wildlife sanctuary, right? Which-

00:15:55 **Dr. Cindy**

They have a wildlife sanctuary tour and we have our large animal museum, The Meek Museum. That's usually either in an activity or available for touring also.

00:16:03 **Tania**

Yeah. So, for faculty who bring their children to this event, it's also an opportunity to really explore the wildlife sanctuary and to see what it looks like if they've never been there and get inspired to use it for their classes, because it's open to the entire campus community to use for their classes.

00:16:22 **Dr. Cindy**

Absolutely. And then I did want to mention, like you said, we have water balloons. That's always their thing.

00:16:28 **Tania**

And the rockets.

00:16:30 **Dr. Cindy**

And the rockets. The planetarium has a planetarium show and they're shooting off rockets up there.

00:16:35 **Tania**

Yeah. We have really so many wonderful resources on our campus - to think that kids can go see a planetarium, that they can go explore the wildlife sanctuary. That The Meek, if people haven't seen The Meek, it's unbelievable; the mount of animals that we have in there, it's really, really fantastic. So, I wonder if you have anything else that you still wanted to share that we maybe haven't touched on yet?

00:17:04 **Dr. Cindy**

I think I would just encourage anybody listening, if this sounds like a fun day to you, to look for this event next year, it'll be probably in April or May. That's generally when we do the event. Natural Science Division office could probably give more information once things get rolling next year, but I would just encourage anyone who's listening that thinks this sounds like a fun event to join next time.

00:17:29 **Tania**

Yes, and you already shared earlier that one way to contribute could also be donations. We try to keep this event very affordable for the children and their families. So, I know this year we only charge $5 for the registration and every child gets a lunch and a t-shirt, and the booklet to go with the activities. So, I think it's really a great opportunity.

00:17:55 **Tania**

I'm so glad that you have already identified folks in your department who will carry on the torch so that we will never forget this very special person, Debbie. And of course, I wish you all the best for your retirement as you learn to cook more bugs from your husband.

00:18:19 **Dr. Cindy**

I don't know if I'm going to cook bugs, but thank you so much, I appreciate that.

00:18:21 **Tania**

Thank you so much for this conversation.

00:18:25 **Dr. Cindy**

Thank you for having me.

00:18:28 **Christina**

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast, and don't forget to share your favorite episodes.