

# Students to race solar-powered model cars in 5th Annual Solar Grand Prix

## Orange County Breeze

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*The following information was released by the Office of Councilwoman Gerri Schipske.*

Sixty-nine teams from 19 different schools and organizations in and around Long Beach will compete in the Fifth annual Solar Grand Prix hosted by Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske. More than 400 students, coaches and volunteers will participate on race day. Students grades 6-12 will race solar-powered model cars they have designed, powered only by the sun.

This year's solar car kits and student supplies were purchased thanks to generous donations from Signal Hill Petroleum and Sares-Regis. Donations also cover the costs of providing t-shirts, awards, track materials, lunch and other materials needed for the competition.

Sponsors of the event include: Signal Hill Petroleum, Pacific Pointe at Douglas Park by Sares-Regis Group, Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters, The Port of Long Beach, Segue to Solar, Supervisor Don Knabe, AES Alamos, P2S Engineering, Keesal, Young and Logan, Dr. Mike Walter, Long Beach Lifeguards Association, Bethany Lutheran School, and Partners of Parks.

"Students work in teams to design their cars and create a completely solar-powered racing vehicle," Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske commented, "It's a great experience and an exciting event for the team members because they gain real world experience in the application of math, science and engineering skills. The goal of this annual event is to inspire students to pursue careers in engineering and science and to explore careers with companies that focus on sustainability."

The Solar Grand Prix challenges students to work as a team, using their creative thinking and scientific knowledge to experiment, design, and build a high-performance model vehicle. Every team receives a starting kit, which includes a solar panel and electric motor. How they choose to construct a winning racer and what they will add to the basic kit will also be judged in separate categories for design, innovation, and more.

On February 1, 2014, each student attended an orientation on event rules, the basics of solar energy, and an introduction to model car design and construction. Additionally, representatives from the CSULA EcoCAR 2 team talked to the students about the developments in automotive engineering and the opportunities available to them in college and in the workforce should they continue to engage with topics such as math, science, engineering and design.

At the orientation, each team received a solar car kit that included a solar panel and a motor. Student teams have been working since then to design a solar car that will be raced at El Dorado Park on March 8. Students are awarded prizes for best design and for speed. A volunteer panel of technical experts will judge the cars and officiate the race. The 20-meter wooden tracks have been constructed by the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters since the competition began in 2010.

Middle school team vehicles will be judged between 8:30-10:00 a.m., high school teams will be judged beginning at 10:00 a.m., Opening Ceremony and races begin at 10:15. Races will continue until 2:00 followed by the awards ceremony.

The event is expected to attract over 1000 family members, friends, and fans who will gather to watch the cars race on a 20 meter (65 foot) track in a series of head to head elimination rounds, on March 8 at El Dorado Park.

"The success of the Solar Grand Prix every year is due to the generous support of our sponsors, volunteers, and the coaches who work with their teams to produce their racing vehicles," noted Schipske.

For more information about the Solar Grand Prix, or to volunteer on the event day, contact Haley Mizushima, Project Coordinator in the Office of Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, 562-570-6932 or [haley.mizushima@longbeach.gov](mailto:haley.mizushima@longbeach.gov) <sup>[1]</sup>. Information about the race is also posted on the 5th District website. Further information concerning the Solar Grand Prix, including materials for teachers, can be obtained at: <http://www.longbeach.gov/district5/solargrandprix/default.asp> <sup>[2]</sup>.