

# Perspectives

Members' opinions and practical advice, plus guest columns and reviews



Extra! Read all about it! **Home ec teacher dishes up basic skills!**

"THE SPITBALL-SIZED AMOUNT OF NUTRITION EDUCATION CHILDREN GET FROM K-9 BIOLOGY JUST ISN'T ENOUGH," SAYS MONA KLEIN. WHERE ELSE WILL TEENS LEARN ABOUT NUTRITION AND FOOD PREPARATION, CHILD DEVELOPMENT, PARENTING AND MONEY MANAGEMENT? READ MORE WHAT THIS SPITFIRE OF A TEACHER THINKS ON PAGE 23.



## Home ec teacher dishes up basic skills

By Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

**DON'T TELL MONA KLEIN** that home economics teachers are an endangered species — or that the subject matter is outdated in this day and age. This Menlo-Atherton High School culinary and life-skills teacher just might reach the boiling point.

“Home ec teachers have not gone the way of the cowboy — and neither has the cowboy,” she asserts. “Times have changed, social and economic needs have changed — and so have the cowboy and the home ec teacher. It is time to reconsider some of the issues that make home economics education an important discipline.”

Giddyup.

We asked this outspoken, passionate Sequoia District Teachers Association member to explain her views on why students need these classes to become responsible, healthy and productive adults. Most of the curriculum — nutrition and food preparation, child development, parenting, consumer education, money management, fashion and interior design — is just horse sense, says Klein, entering her 40th year teaching the subject, although today, more than ever, teens are less likely to learn these things at home. ■

### In Mona's words:

#### **People may not realize...**

money management and consumer education have always been key components of home economics. It's needed to navigate today's cost of living, the pitfalls of student loans and the dependence on credit.

#### **Home economics is needed today more than ever because...**

it teaches students about food choices and empowers them to apply their nutrition knowledge during food preparation labs. It's needed to combat an increase in childhood obesity and childhood diabetes. My students say they almost never sit down to eat with their families. With both parents working outside the home, teens are doing more of the grocery shopping. And the spitball-sized amount of nutrition education children get from K-9 biology just isn't enough.

#### **Another reason schools need home ec classes is...**

they soften the harsh edges of high school. It's nice to have a place where anyone can get a PB&J sandwich, when needed.

#### **I am concerned about the future...**

since there is a shortage of credentialed home economics teachers, and many are reaching retirement age. University students majoring in family and consumer sciences (the new term for home economics) are hesitant about spending an extra year to acquire the single-subject credential, because there is a false impression that home economics is no longer offered in high school. In fact, most programs in California schools survived extinction, but were trimmed to a smaller size. Often when a position opens up, there are few qualified applicants.

#### **To stay current in the field...**

I just attended a home economics teacher's conference, where I learned more about lesson planning for Common Core than I have learned anywhere else. Our home economics consultants in the Department of Education are always providing us with the latest knowledge and skills for teaching.

#### **It's a great subject to teach...**

because you get to share life skills with teens every day. And what's more important than that?