

## Spancion Helps Bring Science to Life

Spancion is helping students all over the Bay Area (photo right) explore science and technology through the "SciVan," a Spancion-funded bio-diesel van (photo below) that transports hands-on educational workshop materials to local students. The van travels to any site where there are students ready for a fun and interactive science lesson.

The SciVan is a critical component for A Schmahl Science Workshop (SSW), a San Jose-based non-profit organization that focuses on providing science activities for pre-K to 12 th grade students through a partnership of students, parents, teachers, scientists and science professionals.



The goal and purpose of the van is simple: to efficiently transport materials so students have an opportunity to learn invaluable lessons through practical science. The van and workshops fill a constant need. Belinda Schmahl, executive director of SSW, says the workshops cannot be done proficiently without the van, where many "extras" are also stored, eliminating the need for several trips for one workshop. In addition, many teachers typically do not have the funds or resources to host such creative sessions, so SSW brings it to them.

The workshops are especially beneficial to students in underserved schools and communities, where resources are scarce, but students are just as eager and capable as in affluent communities. Additionally, students who are home schooled can take advantage of the same quality science workshops as their peers in other schools.



The SciVan also serves the environment by burning clean alternative fuel that comes from 100 percent renewable resources – a science lesson in and of itself.

The Spancion SciVan has been available since the 2006-2007 school year. Schmahl says the van has had a major effect in SSW's ability to grow, letting them add at least one more workshop a day. That does not sound like much, but it is equivalent to enlightening 3,000 more students every year. In addition, different workshop materials can be loaded into the SciVan altogether, saving time, money and the instructors' backs. The van is also a mobile advertisement for

SSW with its logo and information covering the van, which has helped in outreach efforts. The advertising also serves Spancion well, with prominent logo placement on the doors to show the company's support for science education.

SSW students range from grade school, junior and high school, to charter and private school, as well as home schooled kids. With over 400 workshops, students are exposed to an unusually diverse range of topics, from learning about states of matter to analyzing DNA and creating wind-powered cars.

SSW considers the SciVan and workshops as an investment in Silicon Valley's future. SSW workshops enable teachers to start developing a scientifically literate student population early in their education and continue it through high school. The results are a growing population that is better able to compete for jobs as well as contribute to the scientific advancement and economic vitality of Silicon Valley.

For more information on the Spancion SciVan or SSW, visit [www.schmahlsience.org](http://www.schmahlsience.org). To learn more about volunteering with SSW, visit [https://spancion.volunteermatch.org/results/opp\\_detail.jsp?ps2=sem&oppid=346601](https://spancion.volunteermatch.org/results/opp_detail.jsp?ps2=sem&oppid=346601).