

Stronger, Smarter, Smaller, Cleaner: Materials Science Hits Prime-Time

www.mrs.org/makingstuff

Has anyone ever asked you, "What exactly do you do at work all day?" Does it sometimes feel like all you do is sit at your computer, go to meetings, answer your e-mails, write reports, and track budgets? Sure, every now and then, you get to work with a student or teach a class, but would you be able to convey the excitement of why you wanted to grow up to be a materials researcher to a classroom of middle school students?

While science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education is receiving a great deal of attention, the truth is that materials science still struggles to attract students to enter the discipline. Maybe we need our own TV show similar to how surgeons, lawyers, and detectives are featured in hit shows like *Grey's Anatomy*, *Law & Order*, and *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* to help excite the public about our field. Hasn't forensics become a popular profession in part due to the public exposure provided by shows like *CSI*?

Well, having your job featured in prime-time is no longer a pipe dream! The Materials Research Society (MRS) has partnered with WGBH and its science documentary series NOVA to create a prime-time public television mini series aptly titled *Making Stuff*.* The four-part series, which is expected to air on consecutive Tuesdays in November 2010, will focus on the themes of "Stronger," "Smarter," "Smaller," and "Cleaner." The series will introduce the fundamental concepts of materials science in a fun and exciting way while teaching the public how scientists can tailor materials to meet new challenges.

To add to the excitement, NOVA announced that they have "lined up some interesting adventures for [their] host [David Pogue] including trips to a demolition derby, an active Navy aircraft carrier, a steel mill, a diamond cutter, and to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] for a slow-motion look at exactly how things break." Also slated to make an appearance are interviews with conference attendees at the 2009 MRS Fall Meeting in Boston answering the question "What is the strongest material?" If you, your students, or even your family miss the live broadcast of this series, have no fear—the episodes will be released on DVD as well as streamed on the NOVA Web site to entertain and educate the public for years to come.

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NOVA's film crew shoots an interview of *Making Stuff* host David Pogue (far left) with materials researcher Vicki Keast of the University of New Castle at the 2009 MRS Fall Meeting in Boston, Mass.

In parallel to the airing of *Making Stuff*, MRS is working directly with the WGBH Education Outreach Department to unleash a nationwide outreach effort aimed at the general public, educators, and youth to further stimulate interest in materials science while providing the necessary educational resources and training. These "Month of Stuff" learning opportunities are expected to include "Get Stuff" scavenger hunts (online and in the community), public science demonstrations, science cafes, and the creation of materials science-based web interactive programs developed specifically for use in middle and high school

classrooms. Pilot cities and locations for the live components of this program are being determined.

For more information on how you, your students, and your colleagues can get involved in this unique public outreach opportunity, take a peek at the MRS NOVA Web page (www.mrs.org/makingstuff) and start planning now to bring the excitement of materials science to your community!

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JEOL USA, Inc.	271
NanoIntegris	314
National Electrostatics Corp.	305
Solartron Analytical	258, Outside back cover
35th IEEE Photovoltaic Specialists Conference	321

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