Almost all Americans believe in miracles

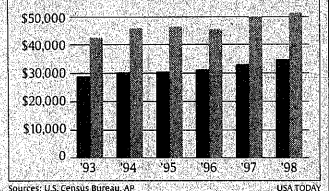
More than eight in 10 Americans believe that God performs miracles, and almost half believe they have experienced or witnessed one, a *Newsweek* magazine poll finds. The poll, released Saturday, shows that 84% of Americans have faith in divine miracles, and 79% believe in the reality of miracles described in the Bible. Nearly half (48%) have personal experiences with miracles, and 63% say they know of people who have. Also, 90% of Christians are miracle believers, as are 98% of evangelical Protestants, the poll says.

Penn naturalist wins science's Japan Prize

Retired naturalist and landscape architect Ian McHarg is to become the 24th American to receive the prestigious Japan Prize. McHarg, 79, professor emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania, will be honored in Tokyo this week for his work integrating ecology and urban planning. Forty-three scientists have been named since the prize, administered by the Science and Technology Foundation of Japan, was established in 1985, and three recipients have gone on to win Nobel Prizes. The award carries a prize of 50 million yen, or approximately $485,000. Second prize goes to Kimishige Ishizaka, a Japanese scientist who helped found the La Jolla Institute for Allergy and Immunology near San Diego. Ishizaka won for research that helps explain allergic reactions.

Moving up, lagging behind

While more women are working in top-level positions in corporate America, the income disparity between the sexes remains.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, AP — USA TODAY

Women in more top jobs, still paid less

The "glass ceiling" that historically has been a barrier to advancement by women in the workplace is showing some cracks, a gradual change backed up by Census Bureau figures. According to the latest government estimates, more than 7.1 million women were in full-time executive, administrative or managerial positions in 1998 — a 29% jump from 1993. Approximately 9.4 million men had the same kinds of jobs, but that represented only a 19% increase. Analysts point to a variety of factors, including the growing number of working single mothers and two-income households. Females also make up 51% of the overall population. But while the median income level for men and women in executive positions rose at the same 20% clip in 1998, men made nearly $17,000 more — $51,351 — the statistics show.

TB cases prompt concern in urban East

An outbreak of tuberculosis in New York City and Baltimore among a group of men who consider themselves "transgender" — they are biologically male but identify themselves as female — has prompted health officials to warn that the disease could be spreading in other large Eastern cities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 26 cases of active TB and 37 dormant infections had been confirmed among men and women who had contact with or were members of a social network of predominantly young, black men. "We want to heighten awareness in large metropolitan areas," CDC epidemiologist Peter McElroy says. He says groups hold dances and fashion balls "regularly in Philadelphia, Newark, N.J., New York and Atlanta." McElroy says active TB "can be prevented, and it certainly can be cured."

Drug OK'd to treat spreading colon cancer

The Food and Drug Administration has approved Camptosar (irinotecan hydrochloride injection) for treating patients with colorectal cancer that has spread beyond the colon or rectum. Two studies show that the drug, made by Pharmacia, can prolong lives when used in combination with 5-fluorouracil/leucovorin (5-FU/LV) as a first-line therapy.

Jersey City school is USA's 'kindest'

J.W. Wakeman School in Jersey City is the "Kindest School in America," with students there performing 59,247 acts of kindness and justice during a two-week initiative in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January. During the Kindness & Justice Challenge, 2,811,442 students at 11,201 schools across the nation participated by tracking ways they helped others or stood up for what's right, says the sponsor, Do Something, a non-profit group started by actor Andrew Shue to encourage young people to be community leaders. A list of winning participants from all 50 states is available at www.dosomething.org/kjchallenge.

From staff and wire reports

USA TODAY Snapshots®

Seeking child health information

Whom parents with children age 4 and younger turn to for help or information about a child's

By James Kegley for USA TODAY

Turned on and tuned in: Harrisonburg (Va.) High School science teacher Myron Blosser explains what's on screen during a lesson on cells.

Technology-inspired teaching

Equipment helps students learn to love math and science

By Maribel Villalva
USA TODAY

No child is too young to use technology to learn at Magnolia Park Elementary in Ocean Springs, Miss.

Pupils as young as 5 are surfing the Internet and learning about science via a computer screen. Digital cameras and big-screen TVs are replacing the traditional chalkboards — helping teachers illustrate mathematical and scientific concepts.

In 1996, teacher Edna Waller started the PRISM (Problem Solving and Reasoning Skills through Investigations in Science and Math) lab at the school. It has equipment so advanced that it's also used by students at the local junior college and university.

"We have assembled materials and resources so that students can develop a love for math and science," says Waller, who worried that elementary schools weren't focusing enough on those subjects. Since 1996, the school has spent about $75,000 on equipment for the lab.

"Our students are leaving here with confidence. They're very familiar with computers and science."

Waller is among the growing number of educators who are taking advantage of advancing technology to inspire students to learn. She and other members of the current All-USA Teacher Team, USA TODAY's recognition program for outstanding teachers, are examples of educators who tap the power of technology. They use technology to make their teaching more efficient and effective and to expand their reach.

"It's an invaluable aid. It's not the beginning and not the end. But it makes education a lot more real for kids," says team member Tina Cross, lead science teacher for the Integrated Math/Science/Technology Magnet Program at Carver High in Columbus, Ga.

Students doing fieldwork, for example, don't lose learning time trekking back to a lab to calculate results; they just plug them into a laptop computer spreadsheet, she says. "Everybody loves immediate feedback."

When Cross arrived at Carver in 1997, enrollment in the magnet program was at an all-time low. The school's computers were outdated. But through student-researched grants, the school obtained $68,000 for equipment.

In training and use of technology, "we are the best (in the region)," Cross says. "If there's something new on the market, we probably have it."

By William Colgin, AP, for USA TODAY

Multimedia lessons: Teacher Edna Waller works with Vincent Arbogast in the computer lab at Magnolia Park Elementary in Ocean Springs, Miss.

Carver students now are writing the grants themselves, and Cross challenges them to develop ways to use technology. She happily notes that it was a student's idea to use 20 cellular phones, donated by Sprint, for tutoring. Each cell phone number has an academic subject assigned to it, and honor society members take the phones home to be on call to help with homework.

Carver students even are conducting technology-training workshops for teachers in the region. They also fix old, donated computers for use in area schools.

"These students are our future," Cross says. "We need to provide them with the background to make them successful."

The science students of Myron Blosser, another All-USA team member, aren't learning just how to look at cells under a microscope. They're learning how to fingerprint and multiply their own DNA. His 14 molecular-genetics students use equipment worth more than $25,000 (not counting the computers).

"I wanted my classrooms to mimic the real world," says Blosser, who teaches at Harrisonburg (Va.) High. "My students do work that's similar to what a forensic scientist does."

As science coordinator for Harrisonburg schools, Blosser also works on the annual Biotechnology Symposium for area students and faculty. Last month David Ayares, vice president of research and development for PPL Therapeutics (the company that cloned Dolly the sheep), spoke to more than 230 students.

How does Blosser attract the big names?

"I'm willing to risk failure or being told no, but people are hungry for innovative, exciting projects."

This summer, 22 Harrisonburg High students and six faculty members will embark on a 34-day, coast-to-coast journey in a lab-equipped bus to study natural-resource management. They'll combine the "hard science" data analysis with studies of the ethics of natural-resource management, Blosser says.

With remote satellite access, they'll report their findings about agriculture management in Kansas, forestry in Oregon and water in the West on the Web at www.shentel.net/cst2cst.

"The goal is to get the students out into the world. That's where science takes place," Blosser says.

Take notes, class: Your teacher could be a star

Nominations are being accepted for USA TODAY's third annual All-USA Teacher Team, honoring individuals and instructional teams for unlocking students' minds, advancing their knowledge and making a difference in their lives.

Active, full-time, certified teachers of kindergarten to 12th grade who haven't been named to a previous First Team may be nominated by anyone willing to describe in writing why the nominee is outstanding. The 20 named to the First Team will be featured in USA TODAY in October and receive a trip to the newspaper's headquarters in Arlington, Va., to receive a trophy and a check for $2,500 for their schools. Second and Third teams of 20 each also will be honored in the paper.

Instructional teams of no more than six teachers may be nominated as a single entity. Teaching teams must be intact for the 2000-01 school year.

Nomination forms can be obtained by calling 800-872-2216 or by visiting allstars.usatoday.com.

All-USA team member Sylvia "Dee" Shore started a water conservation project six years ago to help her third-graders learn about the environment and to help monitor the stream near Clubview Elementary School in Columbus, Ga., where she teaches. Her pupils use computers to graph their data, and technology has helped Shore expand the River Kids' Network to about 1,000 students from 18 elementary and middle schools throughout Georgia.

Students share data via e-mail and submit material for the River Kids' newsletter. Soon they'll be able to communicate by videoconferencing.

"It's amazing," Shore says. "No one used to talk about the rivers before, but now everyone gets involved."

All the teachers interviewed say that teachers nationwide are moving toward more use of technology.

But many teachers tend to use technology just to say they use technology, when it's really just a tool to help gather data and make findings known, Blosser says.

"What concerns me is seeing teachers without vision," he says. "There are some out there who think what they did yesterday is still OK today. That has got to change."

Hopes will be high, 1 million miles high, after Hubble

By Dan Vergano
USA TODAY

Time flies when you're exploring the depths of the universe, say astronomers celebrating today's 10th anniversary of the Hubble Space Telescope. And the best discoveries, they say, may be yet to come.

On April 24, 1990, Hubble ascended into orbit with a faulty lens and aging hardware. Thirteen servicing missions later, the floating observatory has exceeded scientists' fondest hopes.

In the past decade, the space tele-

1 million miles from Earth at a naturally stable gravitational point. Far from our planet's heat and noise, and shielded from the sun, the NGST's 26-foot mirror would gather infrared light about 400 times more efficiently than Hubble. The sun shield would cool the spacecraft to almost 406 degrees below zero, crucial to letting its sensors detect dim bursts of energy in far-off galaxies.

"Unfortunately, you lose the ability to service the telescope when it's that far away," says astronaut Claude Nicollier of the European Space Agency, a veteran of two Hubble repair missions. Design-

Astronomer Saul Perlmutter of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory helped lead one of two teams that made the discovery. "Supernovas turned out to be a pain in the neck until we started getting much clearer data from Hubble," he says.

For the future, he and his colleagues have pinned their hopes on a space telescope called the Supernova Acceleration Probe (SNAP).

"We need SNAP to really nail down the expansion of the universe," Perlmutter says. The proposed spacecraft, also set to orbit at a gravitational stabil-