

Pupils compete in Future City Competition

Transit Middle group achieves top five

by JILL SCHMELZER
Reporter

Schools from across Western New York competed in the 2007 National Engineers Week Future City Competition Saturday at Mount St. Mary's Academy in Kenmore.

Middle school-aged youths were to design a city of the future using alternative energy sources, including fuel cells, which are the key component of urban energy. The groups' strategies may serve as real-world examples, according to a statement released by the Buffalo regional coordinator of the competition.

Pupils worked in teams and under the guidance of a teacher and volunteer engineer mentor to design and build a city of tomorrow. They were to conduct research and write an essay on the pressing social need of using alternative energy sources.

One group from Transit Middle School in East Amherst designed the city "Jubilee," which earned them a place among the top five competitors.

Renee Sima, Brye He and John Er simulated a city located on the coast of New Brunswick, N.J. because the seaport has tides of 28 feet, which could be used to operate the city on hydroelectric power.

Their city used a moat to transport boats to various areas of the city. A conveyor belt was also used to propel the ships over the water mill to prevent them from getting stuck or jammed in the area.

The model included motors, which simulated the tides. The pupils placed residential and commercial buildings in different areas of the city, which was given a population of 1.2 million and set in the year 2185.

In addition to hydroelectric

power, the pupils' city would use fuel cell technology, which John said would theoretically work forever.

Teams that also made the top five were St. Francis of Assisi, located in Tonawanda; Alternative School for Math and Science in Corning; Lewiston Porter Middle School in Youngstown; and Nativity of Our Lord School in Orchard Park, which won the entire competition and will travel to Washington, D.C. for the national competition.

Cole Weppner, Emily Scioli, Matthew Dee and Scott Baum, also from Transit Middle School, competed in the competition with their "Pominville City," which they located off the coast of India.

Their project also runs on hydroelectric power, which is stored in a water tower and pumped to various buildings.

Emily said their city would use fuel cells, so the power would never go out. Citizens living in their city are encouraged to ride bicycles to conserve energy.

There is a monorail, which transports people who cannot use bikes, for instance someone with a broken leg, Matt said.

The project also utilized waste management. Cole said garbage is separated into toxic and non-toxic items. Those that are toxic are to be burned in a facility away from the city, and the rest would be dumped in a landfill to disintegrate.

"We used our imagination," Emily said, noting that her team named the city Pominville because it is like Williamsville. Their Main Street is "Millersport," and they included "Briere's Bay."

"We are really big Sabres fans," Matt said.

Groups from Mill, Heim and Casey Middle schools, St. Mary's School in Swormville and St. Leo the Great in Amherst also competed.



Students from St. Leo the Great designed "Nickel City" with teacher Sandra Gorney. She is pictured with Matt Kondziela, Brianna Cavanaugh, Sarah Brozup and Megan Kelly. The students demonstrated how

their future city would operate during the "Future City Competition" at Mount St. Mary Academy in Kenmore Saturday.

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Harrison Sinatra, Anthony Mar torana, Jacob Gewurz, Peter Donnelly and Zach Paolini, all eighth-graders at Mill, worked together to design "Manningville," named after Peyton Manning.

They, like the other teams, designed their city on 2007 Sims software.

"We took a picture, printed it off and built it to what we thought it would look like," Jacob said.

They used residential, commercial and industrial zones, powered by fuel cells, fusion, microwave, solar and waste power.

Their project received the Energy Efficiency Award.

Chelse Herbold and Alex Bock designed a less conventional city where they took the approach

that everyone is accepted.

Their city, "Chocato," included a biodome because they believe in the future there will no longer be oxygen in the world.

A windmill will be used for convection flow to weed out poisonous gasses, Chelse said. A security station was included to prevent terrorist attacks. Also, a gay pride wall symbolized their city's acceptance of all people.

"We really thought about the future," Chelse said. "Humans may be killed off by nuclear war. There may no longer be air because of pollution and green house gasses."

Therefore, their city included areas where plants, humans and animals could seek safe haven from an airless world. Judges

awarded their team The Spirit Award.

Faculty advisor Kristine Miranda, of Mill Middle School, said Arun Venkataraman and Ashwin Venkataraman, both Mill students, won with Buffalo Engineering Awareness for Minorities program (BEAM) for Best Model.

The first-place winner, Nativity of Our Lord, will join teams from 38 other regions for an all-expense paid trip to the Future City National Finals in Washington, D.C. during Engineers Week, Feb. 19-21. The grand prize is a trip to U.S. Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala.

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Congressional plan will help fund security program

Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds, R-Amherst, met last week with officials from Erie and Niagara counties and the Department of Homeland Security to discuss the Urban Area Security Initiative program.

Reynolds' latest effort to help restore Homeland Security funding for the Buffalo-Niagara region comes a month after the area was placed on the eligibility list for UASI funding and nearly seven months after Reynolds brought the DHS Undersecretary for Preparedness George Foresman to tour the area.

"Nearly a year ago, we learned our homeland security

funding was threatened, and six months later it was slashed in half," Reynolds said. "However, due to the teamwork between our local partners and federal delegation, our area is eligible for its fair share of funding. And (Friday's) meeting with DHS officials will put our area in a better position to take advantage of this eligibility."

In the past year, Reynolds launched his "F.A.I.R." share plan to shine light on the Buffalo-Niagara region's assets and potential risks and vulnerabilities. His F.A.I.R. share plan included:

- Facilitating visits by DHS officials to the area to meet

with Buffalo-Niagara stakeholders.

- Attaining a commitment from DHS to consider border proximity in its risk assessment formula; previously it had not been part of the formula.

- Initiating a helicopter tour, accompanied by the then-Chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, Peter King, as well as DHS risk assessment officials, of the Buffalo-Niagara region to showcase the region's many assets and border proximity.

- Risk-based requirement for UASI grant legislation sponsor.

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