



MEDIA CONTACT:

Michael Lazorchak

AGP & Associates, Inc.

Phone: 989-839-5800

m.lazorchak@agp-inc.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**LOCAL STUDENTS, SCHOOLS WIN \$73K IN SCHOLARSHIPS, STEM GRANTS
IN 3RD ANNUAL A.H. NICKLESS INNOVATION AWARD COMPETITION**

UNIVERSITY CENTER, MICH., April 18, 2016 – A total of 18 teams of students representing seven local schools and career centers presented months of research and hard work over the weekend in an annual competition that promotes innovation and creative thinking among high school students in the Great Lakes Bay Region.

Following the finale event for the third annual [A.H. Nickless Innovation Award](#) competition – which took place April 9 at Saginaw Valley State University’s Alan W. Ott Auditorium – three teams of students went home with a total of \$38,000 in scholarships for themselves and \$35,000 in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) grants for their sponsoring schools.

Winning teams were:

- **First place:** Dow Chargers, Herbert Henry Dow High School in Midland
Prizes: \$5,000 scholarship per team member and a \$20,000 STEM grant for the school
- **Second place:** Chemic Connect, Midland High School
Prizes: \$2,500 scholarship per team member and a \$10,000 STEM grant for the school
- **Third place:** Spider Sensors, Midland High School
Prizes: \$1,000 scholarship per team member and a \$5,000 STEM grant for the school

“Having just wrapped up the third year of the competition, we continue to be amazed by the ideas teams bring forth, from their abstracts to their final presentations,” said Judy Graham, who, with her sisters, Joanie Tankersley and Janet Royce, created the award in memory of their father, Arthur H. Nickless. “To see this level of innovation and creativity from high school students across the Great Lakes Bay Region is truly inspiring; it was precisely what we had in mind when we created the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award.”



Other schools represented in the top 18 teams included John Glenn High School (Bay City), the Saginaw Career Complex, the Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center, Freeland High School and Bullock Creek High School (Midland).

Additional information regarding the top three 2015-16 teams and their projects follows.

First place: Dow Chargers

Team Leader Varun Shanker and team members Austen Zhu, Aatyajit Sarkar, Madison Kent and Andrew Wong, coached by Pamela Kastl, created **a portable device, powered by a variety of energy sources, with the ability to utilize electro dialysis to desalinate saline water**, creating potable water.

“As 97% of the Earth’s water supply is stored in oceans with a salinity of 35 parts per thousand, it is crucial for an efficient, cost-effective and environmentally friendly method of desalination to be developed,” the team members wrote in their project description. “The methods for desalination currently used, such as reverse osmosis and thermal desalination, contribute greatly to greenhouse gas emissions, which manifest into both local and global issues.”

In addition to the scholarships and grant, the team members took home a 3-D-printed traveling trophy to showcase at their school for the next year.

Second place: Chemic Connect

Team Leader Hannah Striebel and team members Natalie Halphen, Max Dykhuizen and Salomé Do, coached by Robert Fox, developed **a mobile application designed to quickly notify registered, vetted potential volunteers who are nearby** in the event of an emergency situation or other short-notice need for volunteers.

“When a volunteering need arises, an entity must have a means of immediately communicating this need to potential volunteers,” the team members wrote in their project description. “Whether it be a natural disaster or a community service effort, it takes time to get the word out about volunteering opportunities. It takes even more time to organize these efforts.”

Third place: Spider Sensors

Team Leader Nathaniel Haut and team members Matthew Schafer and William Hackbarth, also coached by Fox, created **a sensor system to detect and assess moisture levels in farm fields**, alert farmers when moisture levels are out of ideal range, and provide recommendations for rectifying the situation.



“Discrepancies in irrigation, whether the farm is using too much or too little water, stunt crop growth,” the team members wrote in their project description. “The consequent water lost through evaporation and reduced harvest results in cost inefficiency.”

About the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award

The A.H. Nickless Innovation Award was created by the Nickless Family Charitable Foundation to honor the memory of the late Arthur H. Nickless, a local innovator and owner of Wolverine Telephone Company. With a goal of inspiring passion for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), the competition is open to high school students in Bay, Midland, Saginaw and Tuscola counties and awards up to \$77,500 per year in scholarships to students and STEM grants to schools. For more information, visit www.ahninnovationaward.com or www.facebook.com/AHNicklessInnovationAward.