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**LOCAL STUDENTS, SCHOOLS WIN NEARLY \$72K IN SCHOLARSHIPS, STEM GRANTS IN 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL A.H. NICKLESS INNOVATION AWARD COMPETITION**

**UNIVERSITY CENTER, MICH., April 14, 2015** – Students from six local schools and career centers presented months of research and hard work during the finale event of the second annual A.H. Nickless Innovation Award competition, which took place April 11 at Saginaw Valley State University’s Alan W. Ott Auditorium. Three teams of students went home with a total of \$36,500 in scholarships for themselves and \$35,000 in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) grants for their sponsoring schools.

The competition is an annual award that promotes innovation and creative thinking among high school students in the Great Lakes Bay Region.

Representing Herbert Henry Dow High School in Midland, Team Leader Varun Shanker and team members Kelly DeRees, Matthew Flanagan, Benjamin Morgan and Austen Zhu, coached by Dirk DeBoer, received the top award – a \$5,000 scholarship for each team member and a \$20,000 grant for their school. The team developed a piezoelectric prototype producing alternating current to harness energy from movement.

“Piezoelectric materials, when subjected to even a gentle impulse, readjust their crystalline structure, allowing electrons to flow through them, thereby generating a usable, alternating electric current,” the team members wrote in their project description. “Through this process, these specific materials are able to transform simple forms of mechanical energy, such as physical motion, into electrical energy that can be utilized for many convenient purposes.”

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 winners from Midland High School – Team Leader Lauren Maschino and team members Andrew Kim and Natalie Knapp, coached by Robert Fox – presented SmartPill, a mobile application designed to reduce prescription drug nonadherence (patients not taking prescription drugs as directed). Team members each received a \$2,500 scholarship, and Midland High School received a \$10,000 grant.



Third-place winners from Midland High School – Team Leader Ian Murray and team members Ethan Brown, Kyle Franson and Jacob Striebel, also coached by Fox – presented the Braille Sign Generator, which provides a cost-effective method for the production of signage featuring Braille text and large-print, high-contrast English letters. Each team member received a \$1,000 scholarship, while Midland High School received a \$5,000 grant.

“Over the last two years – and this year in particular – the projects for the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award have truly delivered on the concept we envisioned for this competition,” said Janet Royce, who, with her sisters, Judy Graham and Joanie Tankersley, created the award in memory of their father, Arthur H. Nickless. “The amount of work and innovation these students have demonstrated is truly inspiring and is something we know would have made our father proud.”

Other schools represented in the top 20 teams included John Glenn High School (Bay City), the Saginaw Career Complex, the Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center and Freeland High School.

Registration for the 2015-2016 competition begins in September. For more information on the award, visit [www.ahninnovationaward.com](http://www.ahninnovationaward.com).

#### **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](http://www.ahninnovationaward.com) or [www.facebook.com/AHNicklessInnovationAward](https://www.facebook.com/AHNicklessInnovationAward).