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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

**Registration now open for 10th annual A.H. Nickless  
Innovation Award competition**

***Up to \$77,500 in prizes to be awarded to top three local teams and their schools  
during milestone year for high school STEM competition***

**UNIVERSITY CENTER, MICH., Sept. 8, 2022** – After awarding more than \$580,000 in scholarships and grants to local students and schools in its first nine years, the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award is now accepting registrations for the 2022-23 academic year competition.

Aimed at inspiring passion for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subjects and challenging students to work in teams to think innovatively and develop solutions to problems impacting the world, the award is an annual competition for high school students ages 13 to 18 in Bay, Midland, Saginaw and Tuscola counties. Topics typically include – but are not limited to – issues related to alternative energy, healthcare, science, technology or life sciences.

Registration for Phase One of the competition began Sept. 1 and ends at 4 p.m. EDT Oct. 28. Prospective participants can find more information about the competition, read the rules and regulations, and register online at [ahninnovationaward.com](http://ahninnovationaward.com).

During Phase One, each team is required to identify a problem and submit a two-page description of its proposed project. By late November, a panel of regional experts will choose up to 20 teams to continue in the competition; each of those teams will be granted \$1,000 with which to conduct its research and develop a viable solution during Phase Two, which lasts until the March 31, 2023, project submission deadline. On Saturday, April 15, 2023, the teams will present their projects during a daylong public event at Saginaw Valley State University.

Members of the three winning teams will receive scholarships, and each of those teams' schools will receive a STEM education grant. Available prizes total \$77,500 annually and are awarded as follows:

- **First place** receives up to five **\$5,000 scholarships** for student team members and a **\$20,000 STEM education grant** for the school.
- **Second place** receives up to five **\$2,500 scholarships** for student team members and a **\$10,000 STEM education grant** for the school.



- **Third place** receives up to five **\$1,000 scholarships** for student team members and a **\$5,000 STEM education grant** for the school.

For 2021-22, [the winning teams, which earned a combined total of \\$64,000 in scholarships and STEM education grants](#), were:

- **First place: Virtual Motion Therapy (previously known as Rennason), Midland High School:** Team Leader Lauren McGuirk and team members Elliana Rinn and Allison Scheffer, coached by teacher Robert Fox, developed a virtual reality program called Virtual Motion Therapy (VMT) – a gamified form of physical therapy intended to address obstacles Parkinson’s Disease patients face when seeking treatment, including personal motivation, accessibility of physical therapy options and cost of treatment.
- **Second place: Co-Sign, Freeland High School:** Team Leader Hana Pan and team members Miles Amersey, Chloe Pan and Tyler Wayne, coached by teacher Thomas Short, Ed.D., created a mobile app to reduce communication barriers between the hearing-impaired and hearing by translating sign language to text/speech and vice-versa.
- **Third place: RipTide Dragons, Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy:** Team Leader Ricardo Pastor and team members Akhilesh Kanmanthreddy, Ethan Miller and Arjya Misra, coached by teacher David Allan, Ph.D., created a system to record currents, tides, UV index and temperature at beaches to help prevent drownings and melanoma.

### **Celebrating 10 years of student innovation**

The 2022-23 competition marks the 10th year of the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award. Since the first competition in 2013-14, well over a half-million dollars has been awarded to participants and their schools, including \$302,500 in student scholarships and \$280,000 in STEM education grants, respectively. In all, 419 students have developed and presented a total of 136 team projects in Phase Two of the competition, and 46 students have gone on to compete more than once. While there was not a competition in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nickless Family Charitable Foundation distributed \$16,500 in scholarships to 11 past participants who were unable to compete during their senior year due to the cancellation.

### **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. A total of \$582,500 has been awarded since the first competition in 2013-14. For more information, visit [ahninnovationaward.com](http://ahninnovationaward.com).