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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local students, schools win \$64K in scholarships, STEM grants in ninth annual A.H. Nickless Innovation Award competition

Nine-year total of scholarships, grants awarded reaches \$582,500

UNIVERSITY CENTER, MICH., April 25, 2022 – Over the weekend, 11 teams of students representing six local schools presented the output of months of research 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 ninth annual [A.H. Nickless Innovation Award](#) competition – which took place April 23 at Saginaw Valley State University’s Alan W. Ott Auditorium – three teams of students went home with a total of \$29,000 in scholarships for themselves and another \$35,000 in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) grants for their schools. Each winning team also will receive a customized plaque.

Winning teams were:

- **First place:** Rennason, Midland High School (Midland Public Schools)
Prizes: \$5,000 scholarship per team member and a \$20,000 STEM grant for the school
- **Second place:** Co-Sign, Freeland High School (Freeland Community School District)
Prizes: \$2,500 scholarship per team member and a \$10,000 STEM grant for the school
- **Third place:** RipTide Dragons, Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy (Saginaw Public School District)
Prizes: \$1,000 scholarship per team member and a \$5,000 STEM grant for the school

Other schools represented in the top 11 teams included Bullock Creek High School (Bullock Creek School District in Midland), Herbert Henry Dow High School (Midland Public Schools) and Reese High School (Reese Public Schools).

Additional information regarding the top three 2021-22 teams and their projects follows.



First place: 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.

“Parkinson’s Disease is incurable, but the quality and length of life can be improved greatly with treatment,” the team members wrote in their final project report. “Interventions that can improve motivation, increase accessibility and reduce cost are necessary.”

In addition to the scholarships, grant and plaque, the first-place team members took home a 3D-printed traveling trophy to showcase at their school for the next year. Their names will be engraved on the trophy permanently.

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.

Presented by the Nickless Family Charitable Foundation, the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award is an annual competition for high school students ages 13 to 18 in Bay, Midland, Saginaw and Tuscola counties. Its goal is to inspire passion for STEM subjects and challenge students to work in teams to think innovatively and develop solutions to problems impacting the world. Topics typically include – but are not limited to – issues related to alternative energy, healthcare, science, technology or life sciences.

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 or facebook.com/AHNicklessInnovationAward.