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From cancellation to cash: Nickless Family Charitable Foundation offers \$1,500 scholarships to 12 high school seniors

In wake of 2020-21 A.H. Nickless Innovation Award competition cancellation, foundation surprises seniors missing out on final year of competition eligibility

UNIVERSITY CENTER, MICH., Oct. 13, 2020 – When canceling the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award competition for 2020-21 due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the Nickless Family Charitable Foundation knew there was a group of students who would be especially disappointed: seniors who will graduate in the spring and will no longer be eligible to participate when the competition resumes in 2021-22.

The foundation recently decided to offer a \$1,500 college scholarship to each student from the Class of 2021 who participated in the 2019-20 competition as a junior but was not a member of one of the three winning teams. In all, 12 scholarships have been offered to seniors from Herbert Henry Dow High School in Midland, Midland High School, and Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy.

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 a 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. The competition’s annual prizes – college scholarships for students and STEM education grants for schools – total up to \$77,500.

[Uncertainties surrounding the pandemic led the Nickless Family Charitable Foundation to cancel the 2020-21 competition](#), which would have been the eighth annual installment.

“While we knew that canceling this year’s competition was the right thing to do, we also knew this meant our juniors from last year’s competition would not have another opportunity to compete before graduating,” said Tri-Star Trust Senior Vice President, Senior Relationship Officer and Philanthropic Solutions Group Director John W. Kidwell, who organizes the competition on behalf of the foundation each year. “Putting \$18,000 that would have been used to fund the 2020-21 competition toward offering surprise



scholarships to a dozen students who'd previously participated in the competition felt like a great way to make some lemonade out of lemons."

Each student who qualified for the scholarship received an email from the competition administrators in early October and has been given until November 30 to respond. The students do not yet have to be committed to attend a specific college, university, or trade or vocational school to accept the scholarship, but they must inform the competition administrators of their selected institution after graduation for the funds to be disbursed.

In addition to offering the scholarships, the foundation also contributed some of the dollars that would have been used to fund the 2020-21 competition to support a program at the Bay City Unit of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Great Lakes Bay Region that provides a supervised, socially distanced remote learning space for Washington and MacGregor elementary students whose parent or parents work outside the home.

The foundation intends to resume the competition – which awarded more than \$500,000 in scholarships and STEM education grants to local students and schools in its first seven years – in 2021-22.

About the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award

The A.H. Nickless Innovation Award was created in 2013 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 ahninnovationaward.com.