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LOCAL STUDENTS FLEX RESEARCH MUSCLES, TAKE HOME NEARLY \$75,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

UNIVERSITY CENTER, MICH., April 17, 2014 – Students from eight local schools and career centers presented months of research and hard work April 12 at Saginaw Valley State University’s Ott Auditorium during the finale event of the inaugural A.H. Nickless Innovation Award competition. The competition is an annual award for high school students in the Great Lakes Bay Region that promotes innovation and creative thinking. Winners went home with nearly \$40,000 in scholarships and \$35,000 in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) grants for their sponsoring schools.

Representing Herbert Henry Dow High School in Midland, Catherine Haslam, Varun Shanker, Vikram Shanker, Blair Subbaraman 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 investigated microbial fuel cells as a source of renewable energy and a solution to three major problems facing the world today – energy scarcity, depletion of fresh water and containment of sewage.

“We wanted something to solve as many of those problems as possible,” Vikram Shanker said in a recent interview. “So we came across a microbial fuel cell, which actually does all three of those things in a really unique way. It’s one of the only renewable sources of energy where you don’t need to have the wind blowing, the water flowing or the sun shining. It also has no negative yields, which means there are no greenhouse gases emitted by this.”

In addition to the scholarships and grant, the team members took home a 3-D-printed traveling trophy to showcase for the next year. Using cutting-edge additive manufacturing technology, the trophy was designed to represent the innovation and creativity that the teams used to develop their projects.

Second-place winners from the Saginaw Career Complex – Elizabeth Andrusiak, Brittne Cannon, Sahraya Livingston and Cierra Tolbert Hoosier, coached by Linda Holmes – presented a prototype for disinfecting medical devices using UV light. Team members each received a \$2,500 scholarship, and the Saginaw Career Complex received a \$10,000 grant.



Third-place winners from the Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center – Haley Delestowicz, Claudia Gielda, Ellie Hendrix and Lezlie Koch, coached by Eric Stasser – planned, organized and hosted a STEM camp. During their research, they discovered that exposure to STEM activities increases interest in STEM careers among middle school girls. Each team member received a \$1,000 scholarship, while the Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center received a \$5,000 grant.

“The presentations for the first year of the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award simply blew us away,” 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 each team demonstrated was truly inspiring and was something we know would have made our father proud.”

Other schools represented in the top 20 teams included John Glenn High School (Bay City), Midland High School, Heritage High School (Saginaw), Frankenmuth High School and Bay City Western High School. Advanced Placement Biology Teacher Shawn Maison of John Glenn High School led multiple teams and even developed his curriculum around the competition.

Registration for the 2014-2015 competition begins in September. For more information on the award, visit 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 will award 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.