



Midland and Saginaw teams representing Dow High and SASA win \$53K in scholarships and STEM grants in A.H. Nickless Innovation Award

13-year total of scholarships and grants awarded through annual competition now exceeds \$815K

UNIVERSITY CENTER, MICH., April 27, 2026 – Over the weekend, 20 teams of students representing five local schools presented the output of months of research and development 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 13th annual [A.H. Nickless Innovation Award](#) competition on April 25 at Saginaw Valley State University's Alan W. Ott Auditorium, three teams of students from Midland and Saginaw went home with a combined total of \$18,000 in scholarships for themselves and another \$35,000 in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education grants for their schools. Each winning team also will receive a custom-engraved plaque.

The three winning teams were:

- **First place:** Amped Innovators from **Herbert Henry Dow High School** in Midland (Midland Public Schools)
Prizes: \$5,000 scholarship per student team member and a \$20,000 STEM education grant for the school
- **Second place:** The Algeiners, also from Midland's **Herbert Henry Dow High School**
Prizes: \$2,500 scholarship per student team member and a \$10,000 STEM education grant for the school
- **Third place:** MicroGuard from **Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy (SASA)** (Saginaw Public School District)
Prizes: \$1,000 scholarship per student team member and a \$5,000 STEM education grant for the school

Other schools represented at the event were **Freeland High School** (Freeland Community School District), **John Glenn High School** in Bay City (Bangor Township Schools) and **Midland High School** (Midland Public Schools).

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

First place: Amped Innovators, Herbert Henry Dow High School

Team Leader Sean Park and teammate Matthew Lee, coached by parent Richard Park and mentored by Grace Shin, created SCOUT (Small Compact Operational Utility Transport), a modular, remotely operated equipment transport and deployment platform designed for hazardous, high-demand environments.



“Existing S-MET (small multipurpose equipment transport) systems are expensive and complex,” the team members wrote in their final project report. “SCOUT addresses this gap by providing a low-cost, scalable, adaptable system.”

In addition to receiving the scholarships, grant and plaque, the first-place team also will get to display the competition’s 3D-printed traveling trophy at their school for the next year. The team members’ names will be engraved on the trophy permanently.

Second place: The Algeiners, Herbert Henry Dow High School

Team Leader Emma Huang and teammate Louis Huang, coached by parent Wenyi Huang, created AlgiFilm – a dual-network crosslinked alginate superabsorbent film – as a biodegradable, antimicrobial alternative to petroleum-based meat-packaging pads.

Third place: MicroGuard, Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy

Team Leader Akshara Kanmanthreddy and teammates Matlyn Miller and Diya Ramakrishnan, coached by SASA teacher Clara Wagner, created a retrofittable, reusable washing-machine filter with progressive mesh layers that can decrease microplastics in waterways.

Fostering student innovation for more than a decade

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.

The 2025-26 competition marked the 13th year of the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award. Since the first competition in 2013-14, \$816,500 has been awarded to participants and their schools, including \$396,500 in student scholarships and \$420,000 in STEM education grants. In all, more than 625 students developed and presented a total of nearly 200 team projects in Phase Two of the competition during its first 13 years.

Phase One registration and abstract submission for the 14th annual competition, which will span the 2026-27 academic year, begins Aug. 17 on the Register page at 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. A total of more than \$815,000 has been awarded since the first competition in 2013-14. For more information, visit ahninnovationaward.com.