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Cocolalla kids win North Idaho 3D-printing competition

COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho (April 9, 2019) — A team from Southside Elementary School in Cocolalla won first place in the Idaho STEM Action Center's 2019 Northern Idaho FabSLAM Showcase March 16 at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene.

The FabSLAM Showcase was the culmination of a project that began in October 2018 when the STEM Action Center trained and equipped coaches from 10 north Idaho schools and libraries to assemble teams to vie in the competition. Each team identified a natural resources problem in their community that could be addressed using 3D printing and digital fabrication and developed and documented a product to help resolve it. The teams presented their solutions to a panel of judges and a public audience for review and feedback.

Southside Elementary's first-place team designed a rover called LWC, short for Land Water Cleaner, that can traverse land and water to collect trash along highways and in lakes and rivers. The team was comprised of Rachel Aylward, Sara McConnell, and Josey Wallace and mentored by teachers Kathy Klein and Barbie Hunt. In addition to bragging rights, the students won a 3D printer and a \$200 cash prize. Visit <http://sites.google.com/lposd.org/southsidefabslamlwc> for details on their project.

Nez Perce Junior/Senior High School students took second place and won \$300. They designed a device to monitor the water people consume while showering to make them more mindful of their usage and encourage conservation. The team included Raegan Acuff, Brycen Danner, Hilde McGuigan, Cole Seiler, and Grace Tiegs and was coached by teachers Patrick Gallagher and Kelby Heartburg. Visit <http://sites.google.com/nezpercesd.us/nezpercewatermonitor> for details about their project.

A second team from Southside Elementary took third place and the Student's Choice Award, earning \$250 for each prize. They created FRSD, a fire retardant safety drone to give homeowners more time to get to safety and slow the burning of their house until help can arrive. The team, coached by Lynette Leonard, included Sadie Etwiler, Baylee Huffman, Georgia Shirley, and Kaydince Wells. Visit <http://sites.google.com/lposd.org/6thgradeabslam> for details about their project.

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Launched by the Digital Harbor Foundation in 2013, FabSLAM is designed to engage youth in identifying, designing, prototyping, testing, and iterating solutions to real-world problems. The Digital Harbor Foundation partnered with the Association of Science-Technology Centers and the Technology Councils of North America to expand the Baltimore program nationwide, with youth from Idaho and Pittsburgh participating since 2016.

According to Dr. Angela Hemingway, executive director of the STEM Action Center, competitions like FabSLAM are important to the future of Idaho, because STEM knowledge and skills are needed for critical and creative thinking, problem solving, innovation, and collaboration.

“Idaho is the fastest-growing state in the U.S., its tech sector is the second fastest-growing in the nation at 6.3 percent, and 80 percent of all jobs will require technology skills within the next 15 years,” Dr. Hemingway said. “Meanwhile, Idaho’s unfilled STEM jobs leaped from 3,800 in 2016 to 6,300 in 2018, which represents nearly \$413 million in lost personal wages and more than \$22 million in lost state tax receipts.”

Hemingway said the Idaho Department of Labor predicts upwards of 100,000 STEM jobs will exist in Idaho by 2024. She said these jobs will represent \$6.5 billion in personal income and almost \$350 million in tax revenue if Idaho’s workforce is posed to fill them.

The STEM Action Center also hosted Eastern Idaho and Western Idaho FabSLAM showcases Feb. 23 and March 9 in Pocatello and Meridian, respectively. Statewide 42 organizations ranging from schools and libraries to after-school programs — including 225 students and 58 educators and coaches — participated this year.

About the Idaho Stem Action Center

The Idaho STEM Action Center was created in 2015 because Idaho citizens are not entering the STEM pipeline fast enough to meet current and future Idaho workforce needs. Its goals are to coordinate and facilitate implementation of STEM programs, align education and workforce needs, and increase awareness of STEM throughout Idaho. The organization is working with industry, government, educators, and students to develop new resources and support high-quality teacher professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce that ensures Idaho’s continued economic prosperity. Visit STEM.idaho.gov for more information.

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