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New Milford High gadget impressive

Students create Delgado to hold off an attacker

Sunday, April 27, 2003

By Quannah Leonard
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WATERBURY — Don't grab for your Mace the next time someone attacks you — snatch up your Delgado.

It's a five-inch gizmo that sends out sound waves to disorient an attacker. And it's more than that. It's also a flashlight and a locator.

A team of New Milford High School students — who call themselves sequirious — created the gadget, snagging overall highest score at Education Connection's IT Leadership Academy's fourth annual exposition. Their project, and others by student teams from Litchfield County, Greater Waterbury and around the state, were on display Saturday at the Brass Mill Center. The New Milford team won the same recognition last year, too. Jaclyn Vassallo, a New Milford team member, said, "It was very exciting. I particularly didn't expect it to happen. But when it happened again, we were all shocked."

Crosby High School's team, WiNN Security Corporation, took first place for the other region in the competition. Brookfield High School's IBYSE, or International Business for Youth Security Electronics, and Gateways Education's Digital Anomaly tied for second place. Third place went to Pomperaug High School's I Wear Designs.

More than 200 people attended the tech expo in the JC Penny court. While students gave 10-minute presentations, parents and residents milled through the tables looking at the team's mounted displays.

The students were challenged last October to design a security and communications device that would use Wireless Fidelity technology. Saturday's expo displayed these inventions, which local information technology industry experts say could lead to valuable patents.

"I'm totally overwhelmed in terms of the level of performance and the students' enthusiasm," said Michael Mino, the Leadership Academy's program director. "Every year, we have seen an increase in performance."

He credited Craig Fellenstien, an IBM patent expert and researcher who worked with the academy this year, for that.

Education Connection — in collaboration with Naugatuck Valley Community College and Bethel, Brookfield, Danbury, Gateways Education, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Region 15, Plymouth, Thomaston and Waterbury school districts — have been awarded a grant from the state Department of Education to implement the academy. The academy is a program that prepares students for leadership opportunities in the information technology industry.

The academy has also been selected by the state Governor's Office for Workforce Competitiveness as a pilot site for the development of IT curriculum as part of the Connecticut Career Choices initiative.

Six schools and 65 students participated during the first year but, after four years, the expo has grown to 12 schools and 185 students, Mino said. Next year's expo is expected to have 14 schools and about 200 students.

Jacob Pellegren, a Gateways Education team member who won a team leader award, said he has participated in the program for all four years because it's fun. "This is a way for me to realize my visions and dreams," said Pellegren who would eventually like to have his own designing studio.

His friend Jamaal Jacob, also on the Gateways Education team who won a team player award, said, "It leads you to a whole new world."



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