

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Ottawa County students succeed at regional science fair— 6 qualify for national competition**

Participating in the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual West Michigan Science Challenge (WMSC) paid off for Ottawa County students Cassandra Mayers, Morgan Rozema and Ashley Nagelkirk from **Allendale** Middle; Sophie Scholtz and Hannah Wampler from **Grand Haven's Lakeshore** Middle; and Michelle Bogi, Randi Rice, and Grace Peterson from **Spring Lake** Intermediate. All eight earned first place ribbons in the March 13, 2008, regional science fair which included students from Muskegon, Oceana, Ottawa, and Newaygo counties. Of the 81 total 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, 13 received first place ribbons during the awards ceremony, and their teachers received \$100 grants to be used for science learning in their classrooms. Spring Lake Teacher Monica Archambault earned two \$100 grants, Grand Haven Teachers Melissa Jaeger and Shannon Mitchell each earned \$100 grants, and Allendale Teacher Christine Kelly earned a \$100 grant.

Grand Haven's Ferry Elementary student Baylee Christensen was also honored with the Pi Chapter of the Alpha Delta Kappa Sorority special award for projects that show determination plus scientific understanding of a unique problem. Cassandra Mayers of Allendale Middle School received the Muskegon Community College Faculty Award in Memory of Isabel Gabrielson for a project that used the science of chemistry in an outstanding way. Shelby Komar of Spring Lake Intermediate and Sophie Scholtz of Grand Haven's Lakeshore Middle School both earned the GVSU Annis Water Resources Institute Award for Water Quality. Michelle Bogi received a special award from the Muskegon County Medical Fund of the Community Foundation for Muskegon County as well. This award is given for creative problem solving utilized in a project that pertains to any medical field. Grace Peterson of Spring Lake Intermediate earned the MAISD Regional Mathematics & Science Center Plant Biology Award and Randi Rice of Spring Lake Intermediate earned the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Founder's Award.

A total of 30 students from Ottawa County participated in WMSC along with students from Beach Elementary (Fruitport), Bunker Middle (Muskegon), Daisy Brook Elementary (Fremont), Hesperia Middle, Muskegon Catholic, Muskegon Christian, New Era Christian, Newaygo High, and Oakridge Middle. The projects were judged by over 50 volunteers, including physicians, dentists, biochemists, surgeons, educators, engineers, and business people. They evaluated each project's methodology, variables, data collection and analysis, conclusions, visual and oral presentation.

Because the fair is affiliated with the **Society for Science & the Public** (SSP) Middle School Program those fifth through eighth grade students who placed first and placed in the top 10% of WMSC winners, will also receive an invitation to enter the SSP national competition. Bogi, Peterson, Rice, Scholtz, Mayers, and Wampler all qualified. To continue at this level, each must write essays based on their science fair project and science fair experiences. By doing so they could be named one of 300 national semifinalists and ultimately one of 30 finalists. The finalists win all-expense-paid trips to Washington, D.C. to compete for scholarships, trips, and other awards. Last year, Connor Ivens, a student at Newaygo County Public Schools, was chosen as one of 40 national finalists for his experiment involving the search for cocaine residue on U.S. currency. His time in Washington, D.C. was spent participating in a series of team-based, interactive scientific challenges focused on the environment.

West Michigan Science Challenge is supported by donations from Brickley DeLong PLC, Community Shores Bank, Gary and Paula Doig, GENTEX Corporation, Gerber Foundation, Grand Valley State University – Annis Water Resources Institute, GreenDoor Education LLC, HAWORTH, Inc., MAISD Regional Mathematics & Science Center, Muskegon Community College, Muskegon Community College Faculty Association, Muskegon County Medical Fund of the Community Foundation for Muskegon County, Ottawa Area Intermediate School District, Pi Chapter of the Alpha Delta Kappa Sorority, Nina Brown, Thomas O'Bryan, and John and Mary Ann Seelman. West Michigan Science Challenge is one of three student programs coordinated by the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District Regional Mathematics and Science Center.     ###