

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Kristin Tank at (231) 767-7263 or ktank@muskegonisd.org

Science fair winners eligible for national competition—

Teachers earn \$100 grants

On March 17, 2008, students from Muskegon, Oceana, Ottawa and Newaygo counties were recognized for demonstrating their knowledge of science and their ability to conduct independent research through the **25th Annual West Michigan Science Challenge (WMSC)**. Students in the 5th through 12th grades worked individually or in teams of two to come up with a problem and develop an experiment to be presented and judged at the regional science fair held at Muskegon Community College. 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.

Of the 81 students, 13 received first place ribbons during the awards ceremony, while their teachers earned \$100 grants to use for science learning in their classrooms. Students Cassandra Mayers, Morgan Rozema and Ashley Nagelkirk from **Allendale** Middle; Sophie Scholtz and Hannah Wampler from **Grand Haven's Lakeshore** Middle; Lauren Dadd from **Muskegon Christian**; Connor Ivens from **Newaygo** High; Jennifer Barrett, Madeline Field, and Emily Schuchardt from **Shelby** Middle; and Michelle Bogi, Randi Rice, and Grace Peterson from **Spring Lake** Intermediate, all earned first place awards in one of five categories: plant (non-animal) biology, human/animal biology, physical science, engineering/mathematics/computers, and behavioral/social science.

Students from Allendale Middle, Fremont's Daisy Brook Elementary, Grand Haven's Ferry Elementary and Lakeshore Middle, Muskegon's Bunker Middle, Newaygo High, Shelby Middle, and Spring Lake Intermediate were also recognized for a variety of special awards given by individuals, colleges, community foundations, and other science-related organizations.

Because the fair is affiliated with the **Society for Science & the Public (SSP)** Middle School Program, those 5th through 8th 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. To continue competing at this level, students Jennifer Barrett, Michelle Bogi, Grace Peterson, Madeline Field, Randi Rice, Sophie Scholtz, Cassandra Mayers, and Hannah Wampler 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.

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