

March 16, 2007

Students Explore Biotechnology at Lea Elementary

Thirty-seven teams at Lea Elementary School, 47th and Locust Streets, launched their Science Fair as the March winds were blowing, readying the land for spring.

The students, all in grades six to eight, were mentored by iPRAXIS Scienceteers from the University of Pennsylvania's Ernest Everett Just Biomedical Society. Each team had a mentor, and each vied for top position in the judging by another twenty Scienceteers. This Science Fair had a theme: Biotechnology and its promise for the future.

The winners?

An investigation of blood-sugar readings, during a fast and post-fast. The students test blood sugar levels of volunteers who were diabetic and non-diabetics to discern the difference in the body's processing of sugar.

Another top exhibit was the student experiment on phytoremediation. This group wanted to know how metal contamination inhibits plant growth. Using zinc chloride as a substrate, the young experimenters measured out precise quantities to put into the nutrient streams, then chronicled the growth of the subject plants, recording carefully each day.

And the fair's top performer – Best of Fair winner – was the student display on hydroelectricity. These intrepid experimenters made their own "hydro-electric pump," a turbine that used a gravity loop to produce energy from water flow. They measured precise amounts of current generated and voltages achieved, documenting every step.

This is the second time iPRAXIS has helped Lea students produce a Science Fair. The big change this year was the addition of the Scienceteer mentors, who worked with each team to boost the lessons learned.

The 20 Scienceteer judges all agreed that it made a tremendous difference.

Lea Science Fair Winners 2007

1st place - It's Electric

Ticora Bright

Rasheeda Williamson

Joviah Watson

Scienceteer: Nathaniel Nucci

2nd place - Diabetes

Briana Watkins

Sandy Sovann

Deddeh Gibson

Scienceteer: Marissa Martinez

3rd place - Phytoremediation

Desiree Holland

Tiana Coley

Amira Burgess

Scienteer: Lisa Chang

Honorable Mention - Yeast Bioremediation

Isha Sesay

Ashley Bell

Khadijah Myatt

Scienteer: Carolyn Clark