

St. Agnes students receive national recognition for 'Space Day 2007' project

Fifth grade students from St. Agnes School in Avon will be recognized May 4 at NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. St. Agnes School's "Xtreme Space Xtenders" team has been chosen as one of 21 "Stellar" Design Challenges teams for Space Day 2007.

Their solution, RAY, was chosen Best Overall. The students will be honored by astronauts and other dignitaries in a special ceremony hosted by NASA for their "Stellar" Solution.

Now in its 11th year, Space Day is an award-winning educational initiative that seeks to advance science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and to inspire young people to realize the vision of our space pioneers.

This inquiry-based learning program, developed by Challenger Center for Space Science Education, encourages students in Grades 4-8 to employ mathematical and scientific concepts and initiate research to create innovative solutions to the challenges of space exploration.

These challenges meet national standards for science, technology, mathematics and

language arts. "50 Years in Space. . . And Still Having' A Blast!" was the theme of the 2007 competition.

"We hope to perpetuate the legacy of our nation's pioneers by nurturing that same sense of curiosity in our children and engage them in the thrill of discovery," said Sen. John Glenn, co-chair of the Space Day educational initiative. "These students, who represent our future space pioneers, will one day realize exciting possibilities that we can only now imagine."

The Xtreme Space Xtenders team of Grace Brinkerhoff, Liam Coyne, Jenna DiPasquale, Jackie Hayes, Caroline Hecht, Michelle Maginn, Rachel Mignemi, Haley Moran, Luca Tifone, and Jordan Zapf designed a mechanical device, RAY, that astronauts could quickly and easily operate that allows them to retrieve an object that is out of reach.

The design needed to be able to extend at least 100 centimeters beyond its size when closed or collapsed. The students used teamwork and cooperation to win the challenge.

"The Space Day Design Challenges not only promote an interdisciplinary approach to learning in technology, science, math and language arts, but also the opportunity for students to learn how to work cooperatively to solve prob-

lems. The Design Challenges provide a strong foundation for our students to become responsible citizens in the global society of the 21st century," said teacher and team leader Melissa Savino.

Winners were selected by a team of educational experts from a field of 178 submissions from 17 states and one foreign country. Space Day is co-chaired by Sen. Glenn. Lockheed Martin is the founding sponsor of Space Day, which has more than 75 organizations participating as Space Day Partners and Associates.

Millions of students, teachers, parents and space enthusiasts participate in Space Day educational programs and celebrations across North America. Learn more about Space Day online at www.spaceday.org.

Students, their families, teachers and Dr. Gerald Benjamin (Dr. Ben) will be leaving for Washington on May 3. On May 4, they will attend a special award ceremony at NASA Headquarters followed by an astronaut autograph session and banquet at L'Enfant Plaza Hotel honoring them.

On May 5, they will display their winning design at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum and participate in national Space Day activities.

OJAY SHOW