



Delaware schools: The science of creativity

Written by

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-- Pasquale Zingo proudly wore the title of nerd Saturday -- emblazoned across the front of his T-shirt.

"Concord Nerd," the shirt announced, declaring his membership on Concord High School's Science Olympiad team.

As he walked away, people saw his other title: "Your Future Boss."

The worn by the Concord team were just a small part of the geeky fun at Delaware's 26th annual Science Olympiad, held on the campus of Delaware State University.

High crowded into classrooms and gymnasiums to show off their skills and compete against hundreds of other science-smart teens from public and private schools around the state.

Zingo, 15, said he was drawn to the program because of his long interest in science -- since about first grade, he said. On Saturday, he dueled with robots, tested out how much weight a balsa-wood tower would hold, built a model and took a test

on microbes.

"Figuring things out, solving problems is something I enjoy doing," he said.

Concord physics teacher Rob , the team's coach, said the Olympiad is one of just a handful of events that allow academic achievers to show off their stuff.

"It allows them to have an outlet for their creative energies in the same way sports teams release their energy on the field," he said. "When you get into of the moment, and something you've been working on for several months works, they're full with elation."

Delcastle Technical High School sophomores Erin Spinder, 16, and Aliyah Hodge, 15, teamed up to build a remote-controlled robot for the "Sumobots" competition, with two teams trying to push the other's robot out of a square on the floor.

The duo had never done robotics before

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they signed up for the Olympiad, and found it a challenge.

"It was very nerve-wracking to get it to where it is today," Hodge said. "It's hard, but it's easy."

Both girls said they planned to study science in college -- Spinder aiming to go into forensic science, Hodge undecided between forensic anthropology and the pharmaceutical field.

Dover High School senior Eric Suter, planning to study biology and physics at Rutgers in the fall, said he enjoyed the Olympiad because it gave him a chance to stretch his mind.

"It's more hands-on," he said. "In high school especially, it's just lecturing and testing."

The event also helps friendships form, like the one between Cab Calloway School of the Arts senior Katie Dixon, 17, and junior Jeffrey Xu, 16.

"I wouldn't even know you" if not for the Olympiad team, Xu told Dixon.

The two said they were inspired to participate by teacher Reese Rigby, with Dixon enjoying a competition about microbes and Xu liking robotics and astronomy -- far different from the classroom.

"It's more in-depth," Dixon said.



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Delmarva Christian High student Tyler Collins, 16, winds up his helicopter during the 26th annual Science Olympiad at DSU on Saturday. Hundreds of students from Delaware competed in the event. / Special to The News Journal/EMILY VARISCO

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Kyle Kokjohn (left), 17, and Tyler Collins, 16, both students at Delmarva Christian High School, prepare for the "Mission Possible" event during the Science Olympiad at DSU on Saturday. / Special to The News Journal/EMILY VARISCO

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Kerith Wang, 16, an Archmere Academy student, waits her turn during an event that required students to construct a vehicle from mousetraps, CDs and other materials. / Special to The News Journal/EMILY VARISCO



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