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Innovation prolific at expo

By: Claudia Lopez



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LANCASTER - Hundreds of students from Antelope Valley high schools and middle schools gathered Saturday at the Eastside High School gymnasium for the second annual Antelope Valley

Union High School District STEM Expo.

The expo brought together students to compete with each other in seven different categories: Environmental and Agricultural Innovation; Invention; Reverse Engineering; Robotics; Rube Goldberg; Science Fiction; and Scientific Inquiry.

District Curriculum coordinator Scott Hampton said students picked the categories they thought they were best in.

"You don't know what school these kids are from, that's so there is no bias. So you don't know who is from SOAR or an alternative site; two junior highs from the district are also here and they are competing with the 11th- and 12th-graders," Hampton said.

"We had about 130 exhibits and just over 300 kids. The kids have done a lot of different projects - we have reverse engineering where kids can take things apart and then find ways that they can optimize or change something," he said.

Hampton said because there are different categories, students who might not be apt in building something for robotics can use their best skills such as making videos or writing a story and submit it under the science fiction category; all the categories, however, have a scientific element to them.

Students competing in their respective categories brought displays to the expo, explaining with pictures or 3D models about what they were working on.

Highland High School sophomore Salma Fawzi, 15, said her project was under the science fiction category, where she explained the definition of photographic memory.

Photographic memory isn't real, Fawzi said.

"Photographic memory is different than an identical memory," she said. "An identical memory is to remember words; that's how people pass AP tests or SAT tests, they remember words."

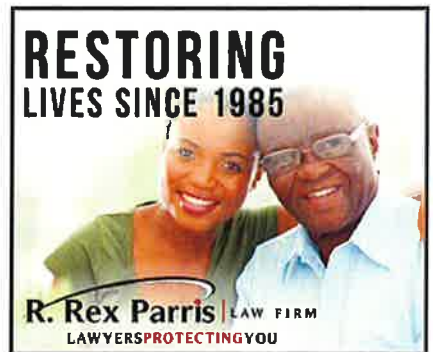
"Have you see 'Finding Nemo?' They make those movies - I found this out because my dad is an engineer and he told me all about it - basically each second there is 24 picture frames, so it's like a flip book and it shows motion. Each second there's 24 of them. That is what photographic memory is. That is when you remember every single detail, it makes a motion in your head and no human being can do that. That's because we don't have enough capability in our brain to actually do it. We use 100% of our brains to do tasks."

"That's what my chemistry teacher told me. I researched this up and I found out that we use 10% to 20% to remember memories."

She also made a short movie and trailer explaining her theory, she added.

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Lancaster High School junior, Hugo Sanchez, 16, said his project fell under the category of scientific inquiry and explained which brand of chips are the most flammable and why.

"Our hypothesis was what chemical properties are contained in the chips, what makes them ignite," he said. "While doing this experiment we noticed that Sun Chips, Doritos and Cheetos all contain oil. When burning them, this oil seems to come out; with Takis it's a different story because they are made out of tortilla chips and the chili powder also keeps it from burning completely.

"We did research and they all contain oil. Takis doesn't contain as much oil because it's more baked. They all contain Red 40, Yellow 6 and Yellow 5, which leads to ADHD behavior and stomach failure. That's mostly when it's consumed daily. It hasn't been proven that it leads to ADHD behavior but a lot of doctors said it is because of the chips."

Quartz Hill High School sophomore, Victoria Acuna, 16, said her project was how vinegar is a natural way to run electric currents in a wire and how using natural resources can reduce pollution.

"You remember the lemon battery in fifth grade? The penny and the nail?" she said. "Well, what I did I took it to the next level and I compared what would be better, a lemon or vinegar.

"I was at the table and I was eating breakfast, my mom was cleaning and I saw the bottle (of vinegar) on the table and it said, '5% acidic.' So I said, 'I wonder if it could do the same thing a lemon does.' So I tried it and it worked the same way. I had read that magnesium and copper are better conductors of electricity together than zinc and copper because that's what is in a galvanized nail. With the zinc you get 0.7, .09 volts. With the magnesium you get 1.3 to 1.5 volts so it's a lot more efficient."

At the end of the event, judges announced first-, second- and third-place awards in each category.

For details on the event, visit www.avstemexpo.com.

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