

It's mind over matter in Olympiad

More than 300 students from 25 high schools compete in Science Olympiad.

By Amy Cavalier
Messenger Staff

The New York State High School Olympiad was filled with a mix of emotions, from victory to defeat, to just plain fun.

Fun was the primary reason Penfield ninth-grader Emily Handelman and 11th-grader Dan Willy signed up for last Saturday's event at the State University of New York College at Brockport.

"Our science club is pretty new, so we didn't really have much time to prepare for the events," Handelman said.

Willy said learning about science at the Olympiad is more fun in than it is in school because "it's not straight from the textbook. You really get to figure out how things work," he said.

On the other side of the spectrum, the Brighton High School Science Club meets twice a week, and Brighton was one of the only two schools with two teams at the competition.

Brighton's dedication paid off. It earned the number-four spot in the Olympiad, and will move on to the state competition.

Scott Robinson, site coordinator for the Brockport event, said the Science Olympiad gives students the opportunity to compete academically.

"It's a chance for them to be recognized for accomplishments in an area that doesn't usually get much attention," he said.

The goal of the competition is to enhance scientific literacy, consistent with state and national standards.

There were a variety of events, some of which required months of preparation, such as Robot Ramble, Storm the Castle, and Mission: Possible.

For Mission: Possible, students had to build "Rube Goldberg-like devices" incorporating at least nine different types of energy transfers, such as chemical, mechanical, electromagnetic and thermal energy. The transfers must lead up to the ringing of a bell, all within



STAFF PHOTO/ADRIAN KRAUS

Livonia students Spencer Crosby (left) and Reece Lambert demonstrate their solution to the "Mission: Possible" event during Saturday's New York State High School Olympiad at SUNY Brockport. The goal of the event was to use as many energy transfers as possible to make a bell ring.

three minutes.

Teams had to build robots for Robot Ramble. In Storm the Castle, students built catapult devices and tried to hit a small castle with them. The team that got closest to hitting the target from the farthest away, won that event.

Others events drew on the students' knowledge and ability to use reference materials, such as Feathered Frenzy, Fossils and Polymer Detective. In preparing for these, students studied fossils, birds and polymers from reference materials. Students then tried to identify the bird, fossil or polymer based on descriptions, bird sounds and other clues.

In Write It/Do It, students work in teams of two. One member of the team spends 25

minutes in a room, writing down instructions on how to construct a preassembled, obscure object made of popsicle sticks, clothes pins, paper clips and other miscellaneous objects. Then the other teammate must rebuild the object, based on their partner's instructions.

Eleventh-grader Tori DiPietro and 10th-grader Emily O'Brien took on Write It/Do It for Penfield High. DiPietro said the event teaches you how to communicate better through writing.

"What I did have time to write down was clear enough, I hope," DiPietro said as she waited for O'Brien to finish building the object.

Of the 25 schools competing, Webster Schroeder, Fair-

port, Greece Arcadia and Brighton will advance to the State Science Olympiad competition at West Point in March. The winners there will move to the Nationals.

The Middle School Science Olympiad was also held this weekend at St. John Fisher. Oliver Middle School's seventh-grade team placed 10th out of 24 teams.

Do You Know???

Seeking any information to locate 3 females of "Phelps" family reportedly born between 1948 and 1954 who resided with a paternal grandmother somewhere in the Village of Brockport near the Erie canal.

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