Small inventors create big ideas at the Sullivans

By Steve Parker,
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Students from The Sullivans School gifted education program (GE) displayed many unique and creative inventions in the 'B' Lobby of the school for the first Invention Convention June 4-8.

Pamela Ashley, Sullivans gifted education teacher, was the driving force behind many of the more than 50 inventions submitted by fourth-and-fifth-grade students of the GE program at the Sullivans.

According to Ashley, the students began their creative inventing odyssey by asking themselves the question,"What would happen if human beings had no thumbs?" This simple question led the children to a multitude of adaptations for simple everyday items including scissors, remote controls and vacuum cleaners.

Students then had to come up with five ideas and research each one to make sure it was not already invented. The students learned about intellectual property like patents and trademarks.

After the students decided on an idea, they created a trifold presentation with a problem, solution, diagram, marketing plan and a prototype of their invention.

Ashley used a creative thinking and brainstorming method of instruction for the student's project called SCAMPER. SCAMPER stands for substitute, combine, adapt, modify, put-to-other uses, eliminate and rearrange which she describes as,"A marvelous way to open student's minds to the creative possibilities of their surroundings."

Ashley stated, "The students surpassed my expectations. They made dramatic improvements over the course of the semester."

The inventions were judged by a panel of local volunteers including James Rowell; Niles C. Kinnick High School's (KHS) robotics club adviser, Leann Hicks; KHS video communications instructor, Barbara McNeil; KHS biology instructor and Angela Lewis; KHS Avid instructor.

(Left) Shaila Adones, Kyarah Pete, Rachel Armstrong, Henri Chandler, Emili Milam, Claire Stancy and Levi Ferguson display their winning ribbons from The Sullivans school Invention Convention held at The Sullivans School the week of June 4-8.
Photo by Pamela Ashley

Claire Stancy demonstrates her pretty quick makeup application invention at the first Invention Convention at The Sullivans School from June 4-8.
Photo by Pamela Ashley

The participants were judged on their innovative creativity and thought, process and presentation, and relevance, responsibility and impact. The two-grand award winners were Emili Milam, from MS. Lyn Borom's fourth-grade class for her trash tube and Henri Chandler, a fifth-grade student from Patric Foust's class for his go-pocket brush.

Sean Holley, a gifted student from Mr. Grosshuesch's fourth-grade class invented a helmet holder because he discovered, after many hours of playing WII, his hands were sore.

Henri designed and built his pocket brush to hold hair gel or spray, clips, mirror, scrunchies, combs and lipstick. Henri originally wanted to market the product to everyone but his mother convinced him to target females in his presentation.

Many other inventions were on display including Shaila Adones' voice-activated key for people who regularly lost their keys, Raina Untiveros' clean beam, a broom made from a recycled plastic water bottle, and Ian Westlake's Brain Freeze, a baseball cap with attached neck cooler and sunglasses designed to keep you cool on a hot day.

(Right) Ian Westlake demonstrates his Brain Freeze cap to Robert Le at the first Invention Convention at The Sullivans School from June 4-8.