

Student app targets customers to think green before they buy



By Brock Weir

Do you like to get free stuff?

Of course you do, but are you willing to download an app and think just a little bit differently about the products you buy at the supermarket and the packages they come in?

Students at Lester B. Pearson Public School (LBP) hope customers might just find this worthwhile as they develop their Eco-Points App.

The concept, the brainchild of the school's Mecha Monsters and Techno Titans robotics teams, recently won the Best Innovative Solution Award at the First Lego League's Regional qualifiers and, since then, they have pitched their idea to Loblaws for some tips on further refinement.

If you're looking to brighten your smile, you might look to Crest Whitestrips to bring out your pearly whites, but when these students see Whitestrips they see red. Each strip is packaged in aluminum and each one is thrown into an unrecyclable box.

The app will allow customers to scan barcodes on packaging to find out how much of a particular product's packaging is recyclable. Consumers would then be awarded points based on how environmentally friendly their purchase is, with zero points doled out for something non-recyclable and up to five points for a 100 per cent recyclable product.

Once the consumer makes the best choice, their eco-points card is scanned by the cashier and, as each product is rung through, the points rack up, redeemable for discounts at the point of sale.

The teams recently had the opportunity to pitch their idea to Jeremy Pee, Senior Vice President of e-Commerce at Loblaw Digital, who expressed enthusiasm for the app, and provided a few pointers on the road from concept to reality.

Following the conversation, these inventive kids said they were eager to take these tips from a pro and add them into their action plan.

?We should be going to the stores to get customer feedback and maybe one day we can actually go and get feedback on what they like,? said student Natalie Opdebeeck. ?I am hoping if we do this they would give us positive feedback because everyone loves free

rewards and free things. It doesn't take much to do, so I think customers would really like this.?

Natalie recalled comparing three packages of pasta that would be scored three different ways on their app and that is, at the end of the day, the core of the problem.

?In this case the customer might ask, ?Why would I buy the more expensive one if I could buy the cheaper one?" The goal is to put pressure on manufacturers to make that change.?

Added Brionna Theaker: ?Next we are going to Loblaws' head office to brainstorm what is going on with the trash and waste management side. You need both sides to make this come together.?