

Building a better future a key driver for students at Youth Innovation Fair



If you wear Crocs, you might be one of the many wearers who jazz up their footwear with Jibbitz, small charms that fit snugly into the holes of the shoes as a way to personalize their style statement.

Some, however, find them hard to attach or remove, and, in some cases, they stretch out the vents beyond practical use.

But, as the saying goes, there has to be a better way ? and local students demonstrated just that at Aurora's 2025 Youth Innovation Fair.

Held at Town Hall on May 14, the Youth Innovation Fair brought together more than 20 entries ? both individuals and teams ? to showcase how innovations today can make way for a better tomorrow.

Among the entries were a popping alarm clock, which used the potent combo of baking soda and vinegar to help the soundest of sleepers start their day with a bang; safety-improving headphones which allow the wearer to enjoy their beats without being oblivious to sounds around them, like traffic; methods to protect wildlife from forest fires; robotic dusters; and, in an innovation perfect for gardening season, practical ways to recycle the plastic pots that protect your geraniums until planting.

This year's entries were judged by Wendy Browne of the Rotary Club of Aurora, Sandy Bundy of the Optimist Club of Aurora, George Rappos of event sponsor Desjardins Insurance, and Town of Aurora Youth Engagement Committee members Nia Mueller and Dabria Peta-Dragos.

Amongst the Junior Category, which covered Grades 4, 5 and 6, placing first was Magnetize Jibbitz, the brainchild of Zoey Rabinovich and Maelle Hamilton of Highview Public School and Kristi Brkic of Lester B. Person Public School.

Their Magnetic Jibbitz, as the name suggests, uses a magnet system to hold the charms in place.

?They are a lot easier to put on,? said Hamilton. ?You just take it apart and you can put it on so easily; the other Jibbitz are so hard to pull off and push in, so this is a lot easier.?

?And the original can rip the Jibbitz,? said Zoey.

Perhaps one or two of the judges had some real-world experience with this particular problem!

‘This has been an impressive evening,’ said event emcee Serena Yogaraj, a member of the Town’s Youth Engagement Committee. ‘I am grateful to be here as the emcee versus having to be the judge with the incredibly hard decisions they would have to make ranking these inventions.’

Honourable mentions in the Junior Category went to William Skripnik with his Cleaning Robot, and Arya Wiskin and Zoey Walhout with their Glow Vests.

The Glow Vests, which caught the eye of Newmarket-Aurora MP Sandra Cobena as she visited the displays, are designed to keep wearers warm, but incorporate wool with glow-in-the-dark fibres to keep pedestrians and cyclists safe.

‘I have to spend bike rides at night time worried people cannot see me, and to keep people safe, warm and visible at night, the target audience is kids to adults who want to stay warm at night, playing, and walking at night – for example, Halloween,’ said Zoey.

‘We first thought of heated jackets, but we did not have enough yarn to make the product, so we decided to do a vest instead of jackets,’ added Arya. ‘We decided to stick with the glowing idea.’

Earning an Honourable Mention in the Intermediate Category was the always innovative EquipeFrancobotique team of Madeleine and Patrick Northrup, Mila Oliveira, Chase Sullivan, Allegra Buchanan, Nathan Yee, Alex Kharlanau and Hagan Pong, who presented a thoroughly researched Water Quality Measurement System.

Honourable Mention in the Senior Category went to Kingsman Tang with his McDull Land concept.

McDull is a popular cartoon character, an anthropomorphic pig, in Hong Kong who is, as his name might suggest, ordinary in every way despite his lofty dreams – and the lofty dreams his mother has for him.

‘There are a lot of mother and son conflicts because McDull tries his best to study hard, never gives up, but every time he tries, he fails,’ Tang explained. ‘His mom is like the typical Hong Kong mother that wants her son to do well, expects him to get good grades, to enter the University of Hong Kong, and to become a respective professional.’

Wanting to expose McDull to a wider audience, while tackling the roots of some parent-child conflict at the same time, his concept of McDull Land is a theme park which plays to one of Tang’s potential career goals of becoming a landscape architect.

‘I’m planning to build some kind of theme park like this, so when people go in, other than them knowing that this is just a cartoon character, they can go in, learn from all this, reflect on what they’ve done, and when they come out, they can learn how to move forward to a better future,’ he said. ‘A lot of people now sometimes just watch cartoons and don’t really [consider the] meaning to it. They’re like, ‘Oh, it’s nice,’ and then they don’t really remember what the important meaning of it is. They will be able to see all of it, know how important this story is for their families, for parents to know how important they have to treat their children, make sure they’re good, for children to know how hard life can be sometimes?’ then I feel that they can learn from this.’

By Brock Weir