

Young inventors solve problems big and small with their own innovations



By Brock Weir

We've all been told at one time or another that there's no use crying over spilled milk. But there's no use in crying over spilled water either.

That's certainly the philosophy of David Simmons. When his cats developed the habit of flipping over their water bowls, making a sloppy mess on the floor, he took matters into his own hands.

With an assist from his art teacher mom, the Grade 7 student at St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School grabbed a bunch of clay, looked at some of the pros and cons of other pet bowls on the market, and sculpted his own solution: the Untipable, Unspillable Bowl. Hand-crafted water bowls, hollowed out and filled in with sand to weigh them down against the power of the ficklest of paws. His heavy water bowl brought him top honours in the Intermediate division (ages 12 to 14) at last Wednesday's Youth Innovation Fair.

The Youth Innovation Fair, hosted by the Town of Aurora and the Rotary Club to mark Canada 15, was held at the Aurora Leisure Complex, attracting dozens of student innovators from across Aurora and even a few from beyond who were able to pitch their impressive and practical innovations to judges Mayor Geoff Dawe, Citizen of the Year and entrepreneur Peter Van Schaik, Richard Gong of State Farm Insurance and Wendy Browne of the Aurora Rotary Club.

"Our future is solid," said Mayor Dawe after interviewing each and every participant along with the rest of the judging panel. "We stayed longer at most of the exhibits than we were supposed to and we took a long time debating through the winners and the scoring system we had."

The Classy Cyborgs' winning streak continued at the Youth Innovation Fair.

Just days after the young innovators from Lester B. Pearson Public School scooped a Canada 150 Citizenship Award medal from Leona Alleslev in the category of Discovery and Innovation, they took home first prize as Most Innovative in the 15-17 Category. The group has gained renown for their Treasure Box Braille Learning System which pairs computer software with an external Braille which allows individuals to more easily learn the alphabet and basic math to those who are visually impaired but can't read Braille.

Representing the team at the Youth Innovation Fair were Sebastian Villate, James Andrade and Sammy Emamian.

Honourable mentions in the 15-17 category went to Sharon Trac, a Grade 12 student at Aurora High School (Community Leadership) and the team of Serena and Saajan Sethi (Eco Friendly)

Trac's innovation was less of a personal innovation than a pitch for the future, extolling the virtues of the "Tiny House" movement which encourages people to live on a much smaller footprint in a "tiny" house which, thanks to design innovations, can be deceptively spacious.

"You can own a house from a very young age and they are so eco friendly," she explained. "It's just great for the community and the earth in general."

Serena and Saajan, hailing from Country Day School and St. Andrew's College respectively, pitched Instant Heat, a way to store

heat leftover in your oven to help pre-heat it for the next round, saving time and energy costs.

'When an F1 car brakes, the heat created is usually wasted in every other car, but in that form of car, the heat is stored and [used] to make car go faster,' said Saajan. 'The driver presses a button and that heat is put towards the energy to make your car go faster. We have used the same idea. You press a remote and the heat is released and the pre-heating time is cut by half.'

Added Serena, noting that the heat can be stored up to three days: 'Not only is it saving you time, but it is also saving you money because you're creating less heat and cutting your energy bill.'

In addition to David Simmons in the Intermediate category, honourable mentions were shared by students Ada Li and Christine Xue with their education app, and a team with a new spin on rainwater harvesting - upturned umbrellas and automated self-watering mechanisms, accepted by Dylan Ireland, Brendan Ireland, RikBidani, Luke Ivic, Kenny Huang, Eric Xia, Matthew Comsa, Charley Leite, and Dennis Barabanov.

Taking home top honours in the Junior 9 to 11 category was Thomas Bianco, a student at Pickering College, with his toothpaste dispensing tooth brush, with honourable mentions going to Holly McClelland, with her app providing financial and retail incentives for energy conservation, and Claire French for their solar powered boat.

'I first thought of this idea while brushing my teeth. Normally when I brush my teeth I put my toothpaste on the tooth brush and it slipped right off. My bristles were wet and it fell right off every single day and got really annoying,' said Thomas, showing off his toothbrush which employs the same twist dial mechanism as in a deodorant container. 'It uses a corkscrew motion that pushes the paste through the tube and, as you twist, it pushes it up and onto the bristles.'