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# Students show off tech skills at regional STLP competition

AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto:amudd@bgdailynews.com) Nov 22, 2019 Updated 8 min ago

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When fifth-graders Claire Marshbanks and Selma Sakic searched for issues they could tackle through their Student Technology Leadership Program at Rich Pond Elementary, their first ideas involved pollution or saving turtles.

But when the two saw an image on social media – a young girl in foster care carrying everything she owned in three plastic garbage bags – they instantly wanted to do something to help.

“This one stood out the most for community service,” Claire said.

Claire and Selma started with the idea of suitcases and backpacks filled with stuffed animals and blankets for foster children, but after consulting with the Department of Community Based Services, decided foldable duffle bags might work better.

Their idea grew into a project, complete with a website, that they call Cases of Kindness, with a plan to hold a drive at their schools to collect care items. They haven't assisted any foster children yet, but they're hoping their project can make a difference.

“I thought that it would change a lot of people’s lives,” Selma said.

On Thursday, joined by more than 1,000 K-12 students from across the region, the two presented their project at Western Kentucky University's E.A. Diddle Arena during the Student Technology Leadership Program’s Regional Showcase. As one of nine playing out across Kentucky, the competition represented 14 regional school districts, 58 schools and 150 projects.

Pitching their project to judges passing by, the two hoped their project would stand out from the rest and land them a shot at the STLP State Championship at Lexington’s Rupp Arena in April.

Jeff Sebulsky, the state’s STLP coordinator, said students have come up with a lot of inventive ideas over the years, from students who have used a 3-D printer to assemble prosthetic limbs to creating a website for a local senior center.

“What we do is we ask them, ‘Look at your school. Look at your

community, and is there an issue you want to solve? Is there a problem you want to fix?” said Sebulsky, who describes his job as the “best job in all of Kentucky.”

On Thursday at Diddle Arena, Sebulsky said students were pitching early ideas they hoped to take to Lexington next spring.

“It’s just amazing to watch how they’re integrating different technologies that I would have never thought of,” he said.



Along with showcasing their projects on the floor of Diddle Arena, students also got to apply to help run the STLP State Championship. Each year, students help with the broadcasting on Kentucky Educational Television, help set up and troubleshoot IT issues and help produce highlight reels.

“This is just a chance to highlight the skills that they already have,” Sebulsky said.

At a table for T.C. Cherry Elementary School students, fifth-graders Danika Miller, Mikayla Hastings, Zoe Jackson and Gabe Smith showed off their project aimed at raising awareness of plastic waste that winds up in the world’s oceans, affecting the sea creatures that live there.

The team produced a video and slideshow offering tips to properly dispose of waste, and while on a family trip to Florida during fall break, Danika helped pick up trash on the beach.

“I think it’s a really big problem,” she said.

Asked what they get out of participating in their school’s STLP chapter, Zoe said it allows “connecting the dots” with your friends. Gabe agreed.

“It’s a creative way to use your mind,” he said.

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## Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.

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