



Benton students win at computer game challenge

By Alex Paul

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They had developed games tackling environmental issues

Several Benton County students placed well at the second annual Oregon Game Project Challenge held Saturday at Chemeketa Community College in Salem.

The competition pits teams of four to seven students as a way of encouraging interest in computer science. Teams came from as far as Gold Beach on the southern coast to Condon in eastern Oregon. In all, some 45 teams comprised of 250 competed — including two teams from Washington.

From December to May, students develop original computer games that are challenging, fun and tackle environmental concerns. This year's contest theme: water resources.

Judging was based on the depth and breadth of research, game design, quality of presentation, incorporation of the theme, whether the game is fun to play, use of technology and programming features.

The program is sponsored by the TechStart Education Foundation, founded in 2003 by the Software Association of Oregon.

Some of the more interesting team names included: Die Hydrogen Monoxide, The Nerd Herd, The Pogs, Team Kalamari, the Smiley Faces, The Fantastic Four and the Flying Squirrels.

Local placers included:

Middle schools: Ashbrook Independent School, second place, presentation award. Coach Thuy Tran. Team name: A.Q.U.A. (Quintessential Uber-

Creative Aquaticers). Team members: Katie Hart, Carl Croft, Natalia Nickels, Alex Herman, Nick Meigs and Lewis Shotton, all sixth-graders.

Ashbrook Independent School Principal Cynthia Roeloefs said the students "discussed how they designed the graphics, sound and player interface components of their game, gave detailed descriptions of the programming challenges they faced and discussed how they learned about the importance of debugging early on in the programming process."

Middle schools: Cheldelin Middle School, first place, game research and development award. Coach Jeanne Liu. Team name: Hurrricanes. Team members: Hannah Marvin, Allison Lind, Rishika Betrabet and Jessica Chen, all eighth-graders.

High schools: Philomath High School, second place, champions overall award. Defending state champions. Coach Tom Thompson. Team name: PHRED. Team members: Emily Dunham, junior; Anna Maxfield, junior; Kit Morton, junior; Rose Felber, junior; Paul Atkinson, sophomore; Karl Payne, sophomore; and Chase Burchard, freshman.

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