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Area students advance to regional Solar Sprint competition

More than 100 middle school students from across Berkshire County and their families gathered at Reid Middle School in Pittsfield on Saturday, May 31 to enter their model solar cars in the annual *Berkshire Junior Solar Sprint (JSS)*. The JSS is a fun and educational competition for students in grades 6-8 who work in teams to build miniature vehicles powered by the sun and in the process learn firsthand about non-polluting transportation. Student cars were judged in four categories—innovation (design), craftsmanship, technical merit, and performance (speed). The top three winners in each category—12 teams in all—are now eligible to compete in *Northeast Junior Solar Sprint Championship* on Sunday, June 8 at the Springfield Science Museum in Springfield, Massachusetts. Students from Maine to Maryland participate in the Springfield Championship.

“Each year the Junior Solar Sprint gets bigger and better. We are thrilled by the creativity and enthusiasm of so many students, and excited that several now have the opportunity to participate in the regional event,” said Nancy Nysten of CET. “It’s great to see students and teachers working together on projects, and then to see their family and friends cheer them on at the Solar Sprint event. We owe a big thanks to our generous sponsors for making this possible.”

This year, the threat of thunderstorms forced the event indoors where students replaced solar panels with batteries to power their vehicles. “It was a great event, despite the weather,” said coordinator Cynthia Grippaldi of CET. “The students had a lot of fun and learned firsthand that solar vehicles need battery back-up to run on cloudy days and at night.”

CET coordinated the event with support from Berkshire Bank, Berkshire Gas Company, Energy Federation, Inc., Western Massachusetts Electric Company, Northeast Sustainable Energy Association and the U.S. Department of Energy. Additional contributors were Guido’s Fresh Marketplace, South Street Servicer, Bob’s Elm Street Service, Bartlett’s Orchards, Morningside Bakery and Super Stop and Shop.

Students participating in the JSS came from BArT Charter Public School (Adams), Clarksburg Elementary School, Four Rivers Charter Public School (Greenfield), Gabriel Abbott Memorial School (Florida), Herberg Middle School and Reid Middle School (Pittsfield), Nessacus Middle School (Dalton), St. Agnes School (Dalton), and Richmond Consolidated School, as well as from two home-school teams.

Berkshire Junior Solar Sprint Results – 2008

Award **Car #, School, Name of Car, Students**

Innovation

- 1st place: #21 — Clarksburg Elementary School: “That Solar Car” – Caleb Roberts, Justin Cameron
- 2nd place: #23 – Clarksburg Elementary School : “Sierra” – Jillian Cyr, Sonya Merchant, Jackie Therrien
- 3rd place: #53 – Reid Middle School: “ Phoenix ” – Jon May, Michael Coelho, Bryan Tynan, Alex Hall

Craftsmanship

- 1st place: #71 – Richmond Consolidated School: “Lime-O-Zenes” – Mike Renton, Bill Reed, Roma Sabino
- 2nd place: #73 – Richmond Consolidated School: “The Big Mac” – Daniel Meandro, Thomas Randolph, Collin Goodrich
- 3rd place: #53 – Reid Middle School: “Phoenix” – Jon May, Michael Coelho, Bryan Tynan, Alex Hall

Technical Merit

- 1st place: #71 – Richmond Consolidated School: “Lime-O-Zenes” – Mike Renton, Bill Reed, Roma Sabino
- 2nd place: #80 – St. Agnes School: “Solar Kick” – Reagan Smith
- 3rd place: #110 – Berkshire Adventure Learners: “The Solar Schooner” – Cavanaugh Wolski, Jonah Carlson

Speed

- 1st place: #62 – Nessacus Middle School: “Flabbergasted” – Christian Pickwell, Kyle Miller, Nathan Sears, Ryan Parker
- 2nd place: #92 – Herberg Middle School: “Our Team” – Tim McCracken, Zach Rahilly
- 3rd place: #73 – Richmond Consolidated School : “The Big Mac” – Daniel Meandro, Thomas Randolph, Collin Goodrich

The Berkshire JSS is an annual event. For more information about the JSS or solar energy curriculum, contact Cynthia Grippaldi at CET, (413)-445-4556 ext. 25 or Nancy Nysten at nancyn@cetonline.org.

CET is a non-profit organization working in the fields of energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste management and environmental education. CET provides practical solutions that make sense for our community, economy and environment. CET is funded in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council