

Students have X-STREAM fun at fourth-annual expo

By **KIMBERLEE SABSHIN**
Staff Reporter

On Dec. 3, students from Catholic elementary schools throughout the diocese met at St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute in Kenmore for the fourth year to have X-STREAM amounts of fun showing off their creations, ranging from the mechanical to the culinary and everything in between. The X-STREAM Games and Expo, which the high school has hosted since its inception, is the pinnacle of the diocesan STREAM program, focusing on science, technology, religion, engineering, arts and mathematics. It allows students to compete against their peers as members of the newest generation of inventors, while community members, parents, family and friends come to see what their children can do.

The afternoon began with robotics students checking in at the school gym and preparing to face off against competitors from other schools, as participants in other STREAM academy courses set up in the hallways and classrooms. Various demonstrations included "You're the Balm," where students marketed handmade lip balm; Kitchen Chem, where young chefs distributed samples of their culinary creations to event attendees; LEGO-U and PEAP for younger students; and mini-Shark Tank, where students roleplayed as inventors pitching their creations to investors. The day ended with a Kitchen Chem cook-off, the robotics top 10 competition and an awards ceremony.

Jean Comer, diocesan STREAM coordinator, reflected on how the X-STREAM Games and Expo has grown since its inaugural year. She said with the addition of more courses and schools, beginning with 17 schools and culminating in the 30 that have STREAM Academy courses now, attendance at the expo has likely tripled.

"It's because it works," Comer reflected. "Kids are interested. It's engaged learning, the teachers love doing it. It's outside the box, it's project-based learning. There's a lot of faith integrated throughout everything, and everyone sees that it's the real deal."

One of the exhibits, Game On, offered a chance for students to showcase video games that they designed and programmed in their STREAM classes. Melody Nardone, STREAM coordinator at St. John Vianney School in Orchard Park, directed students to create games with one easy, one balanced and one difficult level.

Richard Hibbs, an eighth-grader and one of Nardone's students, started his game off easy but upped the ante later. "I like to watch people struggle in my levels," he said, laughing. "For the last level I made it almost impossible, but I can guarantee it is 100 percent possible, because in order to publish the game, you have to be able to beat every level."



DAN CAPPELLAZZO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Rebecca Sander, a fourth-grader at St. Stephen's of Grand Island, shows off her Ignite the Power of Art project at St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute during the all-area STREAM science competition. The Power of Art program ties together science, art and faith.

Luke Blood, a fifth-grader at St. John Vianney, sat at his computer while playing his game, "Lost in Time and Space," and describing each of the elements, all of which he made from scratch. "I coded the entire platforming and jump mechanics, background and the music. I coded the entire game," Luke said.

At the "Ignite the Power of Art" display in the school's main foyer, Mary McIntyre, an art

teacher at SS. Peter & Paul School in Williamsville, explained how students learned about how advertisements and pictures put thoughts into people's heads regarding where they are going in life and society.

had an hour and 15 minutes every class, and they didn't want to leave, which really made me happy because I was a little concerned that it might be over their heads, but they were right on." Sophia Young, an eighth-grader at SS. Peter & Paul, Williamsville, based her artwork off of a picture of a man confined in a chair. "He was kind of restrained, and he couldn't get out and he wasn't free. So, I wrote a poem on that, and based off that poem I constructed all of this. I molded my hands and I made them so that they were reaching for each other," she explained, pointing to sections of the piece. "The one above, who had freedom, was helping the ones who were hopeless and did not know what to do."

In addition to local students and their supporters, St. Joe's also played host to visitors from out of town, namely Cleveland, Ohio and the Washington, D.C. area, who wished to see what STREAM in the Diocese of Buffalo is about. Pamela Bernards, Ed.D., director of professional development for the National Catholic Educational Association, said the STREAM initiative began through NCEA in 2014. She knew of the hard work administrators in Buffalo, including Comer; Shelly Reidy, coordinator of professional development

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teacher at SS. Peter & Paul School in Williamsville, explained how students learned about how advertisements and pictures put thoughts into people's heads regarding where they are going in life and society.

"We did a whole lesson on that. Then, we did a whole lesson on the seven Catholic social teachings," McIntyre said. "Then, we took and used some other pictures tying in that idea. They started talking about social justice and where we are on that. We

Young scientists descend on X-STREAM Expo 2017

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for Catholic schools; and Sister Carol Cimino, SSJ, superintendent of Catholic schools, put into getting STREAM here.

“We did a conference on this in 2016, and (Comer and Reidy) were some of our presenters. I knew of their work and I knew of the X-STREAM Games and Expo, and I wanted to

come and see it firsthand,” said Bernards. “Part of my goal is to provide exemplars of excellent programs that are in place so that, as I present on this nationally, I’m going to share the work that’s being done here in the Diocese of Buffalo. As other schools or dioceses want to implement this program, they can talk to fellow Catholic school educators that are doing it, and doing it

well.”

“This is one of the most exciting things that happens for our schools every year,” Sister Carol said. “We’ve got probably about 1,000 people here today, and you’d think it was a football game or a basketball game. These are kids who are excited about science, math and engineering, and I’m just so proud of everybody.”



St. Joseph University School seventh-grader Atticus Hlubin (right) and eighth-grader Nicholas Mann look over their future world, entitled “Kosmos,” at the X-STREAM Games and Expo science competition.



Catholic school students from throughout Western New York and their families packed St. Joseph’s Collegiate Institute during the X-STREAM Games and Expo, the pinnacle of the STREAM program. Elementary and middle school students competed in robotics, science cooking and arcade projects, all highlighting science and creativity.



Students from St. John the Baptist, Alden, face off against students from St. John the Baptist, Kenmore, in the robotics competition at the X-STREAM Games and Expo, held annually at St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute in Kenmore.



St. Christopher School fourth-grader Tea Ruggiero takes a break from her STREAM project to fix the star on the top of a mini Christmas tree at the STREAM science competition. St. Christopher students created a healthy veggie dip for their Kitchen Chemistry project.

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