

Danville team tops K'Nex foes at CSIU, sets sights on states



Liberty Valley Intermediate School fifth-graders, from left, Maddie Merrell, Fiona Martin and Sydney Hackenberg, stand with the trophy they won at the K'Nex STEM challenge. Missing from the photo is Pearl Weaver.

MOORESBURG — A team from Liberty Valley Intermediate School won first place in the K'Nex STEM Design Challenge at the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit and will advance to state competition in May.

The fifth-graders — Sydney Hackenberg, Maddie Merrell, Fiona Martin and Pearl Weaver, all 11 years old — created a cleanup car to pick up three objects.

They beat out 68 students from 17 teams in fourth and fifth grades on the school level, said adviser Kristen Beyer.

The team won a K'Nex trophy during the event March 26, topping 11 other teams.

“We were a little surprised we won,” Sydney said.

Sydney said going to the state event May 17 at Harrisburg University will be “a little nerve-racking.”

They will compete in the category for fourth and fifth grades.

Beyer expects first-place teams from across the state to enter from the 29 intermediate units.

She said Liberty Valley had a team compete on the state level three or four years ago. A team from the school has entered the intermediate unit competition the past five years.

On March 27, the intermediate unit held a competition for teams in sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

The Milton Area Middle School team won first place. Members are Ephraim Langdon, Jessica Morgan, Ryleigh Stewart and Seth Yoder. Their adviser is Jonathan Dick, according to Heather Taggart, public relations technical specialist with the intermediate unit.

The Milton team will also compete on the state level, Taggart said.

Sydney and Maddie were members of last year's Danville K'Nex team that competed at the intermediate unit, near Montandon.

Maddie explained their project this year contains a crane and a car with two motors. The crane, with a claw-like apparatus, can pick up tires or dead animals “so they won't cause an accident,” Sydney said.

The animals will be placed along the side of the road or taken to a Pennsylvania Game Commission area, she said.

The tires will be taken somewhere to be disposed of, Maddie said.

They made the crane and car, which can travel forward and backward, with regular size K'Nex and micro-K'Nex pieces.

Sydney said their project is environmentally friendly. The motors are powered by electricity.

She said they are preparing an app where people could contact the car for a cleanup.

During the competition, they explained and demonstrated the project.

According to this year's challenge, teams in the state are tasked with creating a machine that will move three objects at least six inches across a table. The crane must pick up the object, move it and set it down.

The maximum number of students per team is four with each project using at least one motor. Teams can use up to 1,400 K'Nex pieces and have two hours to put their project together at the competition.

Each team will bring a journal and blueprint and will prepare up to a 2-minute presentation.

Judging is based on creativity, teamwork, challenge success, design and presentation.