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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Colquitt County Students to Compete at State Science Fair

MOULTRIE, GEORGIA – February 25, 2021 – Colquitt County students dominated the 2021 Southwest Georgia Regional Science Fair two weeks ago, coming home with 80% of the awards presented. Additionally, five Colquitt County students were selected to participate in the 2021 Georgia Science and Engineering Fair, which will be held virtually at the University of Georgia in April.

Colquitt County High School senior Autumn Hampton was given the Senior Grand Award for her microbiology project on the effects of benzophenone-2 and oxybenzone (benzophenone-3) on hydra harbinensis. CCHS science teacher Vance Hurst encouraged Hampton to participate after working with Hampton last year in his AP Research class. “She’s a really smart student,” said Hurst. “Her research was top notch.”



Autumn Hampton, Senior Award Winner,
Southwest Georgia Regional Science Fair

Williams Middle School can boast of four participants in the state fair this year, including the Junior Grand Award winner, seventh grader Jack Kirksey, who won for his project on “vampire” loads, how much energy devices consume when they are turned off but remain plugged in. His teacher, Jessica Joiner, described Kirksey as hardworking, conscientious, and mature. “He excels at everything he attempts,” said Joiner. “I had no doubts that his project and ideas would advance.”

Sixth grade student Jack Cato tested the effects of color on memory to win the behavioral and social sciences division. “From the moment I saw Jack’s project, I knew we had a winner,” said Maggie Wilson, his teacher. “His hard work was evident, and I am beyond excited for his advancement.”

Wilson also teaches Anna Kate Dekle, who was selected for her first place physics project on how heat impacts the elasticity of golf balls. “Anna Kate is extremely hardworking and meticulous with everything she produces or works on,” said Wilson.



Williams Middle School students: (L-R) Jack Kirksey, Nathan Kirksey, Jack Cato, and Anna Kate Dekle.

Nathan Kirksey, another of Wilson's sixth graders, researched building materials that inhibit WiFi signals, earning him first place in engineering. "Nathan without a doubt shined with his originality," said Wilson. "His hard work will continue to inspire others."

Cato, Dekle, and the two Kirkseys were among 43 students from Williams Middle School who placed in the regional science fair, which Albany State University held virtually this year due to COVID-19 concerns. Other winners were as follows:

Animal Science: Levi Hunter, Emily Thompson, Ret Turner all tied for second place.

Behavioral Science: Francis Bius, Jewel Griner-Hart, Kynlee Haskins, Elizabeth Ann Hobby, and Jayna Perry all tied for second place.

Biochemistry: Abbie Shumans, second place.

Cellular and Molecular Biology: Preston Crosby, first place; Zachary Nowland, third place.

Chemistry: Ella Beck, John David Moore, and Trysten Johnson all tied for second place; Parker Anderson, Harrison Chapura, and Gabriel Torres all tied for third place.

Engineering: Willis McCranie, second place; Sam Brogdon, third place.

Environmental Science: Siya Patel, first place.

Mathematical Science: Sanjana Patel, third place.

Medicine and Health Sciences: Jaelyn Wier, first place; Briley Bowers and Aubrey Wilson tied for second place; Lathan Brown and Adrian Martin-Bautista tied for third place.

Microbiology: Katherine Bennett, Lily Jackson, and Brandy Tran all tied for second place; Keaton Doane, third place.

Physics and Astronomy: Jaden Taylor, first place; Bennett Lairsey, Logan Rivernbark, and Bailey Truett all tied for second place; Ethan Gay and Joshua Scroggins tied for third place.

Plant Science: Wesley Montgomery and Jack Taunton tied for first place; Jackson Edwards, second place.

Jim Horne, principal of Williams Middle School, said the local and regional science fairs are points of pride for the school. "Those teachers and students put in such hard work and produced quality projects," said Horne. "They represent Williams well wherever they are."

The students first competed in the middle school's science fair, which featured 170 projects in grades six and seven. Horne said the pandemic made the research process even more difficult this year because of the late start to the school year and the number of students and teachers who dealt with quarantines. "It's remarkable they were able to pull it off at all," he said.

The middle schoolers and their teachers are all part of PackerX, a program at Williams that focuses on developing research skills and critical thinking through interdisciplinary learning activities. Allen Edwards, director of gifted education for the school system, said the PackerX program and extended research projects like the science fair allow students to see the connection between multiple subject areas.

“Rarely ever in the workplace do adults use the academic skills they learned in isolation, so why do we teach our classes like that?” said Edwards. “Most jobs require us to use our reading, writing, math, and research abilities in concert to accomplish a goal or solve a problem, and that’s what we ask students to do in the science fair.”

Trish Lirio, director of 3-12 science and social studies curriculum for Colquitt County, agreed. “Science fairs are a way for students to step away from the textbook-style of curriculum and apply scientific inquiry for real world issues that are relevant and of interest to the student,” she said.

The Georgia Science and Engineering Fair (GSEF) allows Georgia’s students to showcase their original research while competing for awards. According to the GSEF website, the fair’s goal is to “prepare students to succeed and flourish in an increasingly complex and highly technical world by becoming problem solvers, critical thinkers, reflective learners, and more productive and influential members of their communities.”

A select number of projects from GSEF will be chosen to advance to the International Science and Engineering Fair later this year.

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