

Hamilton shines a spotlight on creative thinkers

School board lauds teachers and students for their accomplishments

BY ZACK NEEDLES
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

HAMILTON — Most school board business is just that, delving into the monthly workings of operating a district.

But every once in a while, an item on the agenda is full of happy news, which is what happened at this week's meeting, when the board recognized students' and teachers' accomplishments this school year.

PTA President Becke Singleton emceed a short ceremony at the start of the meeting, first honoring Kuser Elementary, which was selected by the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) as a 2006 Just for the Kids Benchmark School, a designation based on its students' performance on standardized assessments.

"It's work like this and a community like this with parents and teachers and everyone else working together that makes this possible," Superintendent Neil Bencivengo said of the award.

The ceremony also honored the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) Innovations in Special Education Award winners. Grice Middle School teachers Doreen Pecht and Kimberly DiMezza were lauded for their

"Around the World in 80 Days Program" in which special education students spent one day each month learning about another country's culture.

Board member Harold Damon praised DiMezza and Pecht, as well as the entire school district's special education efforts, for working to "make sure no child, no matter what they bring to the table, is left behind."

Two teams that competed for the first time in the New Jersey FIRST Robotics Competition — Flux-Core of Nottingham High School and Zero Gravity of Steinert High School — were honored with awards. Zero Gravity, which made it all the way to the finals in Atlanta, won the

Highest Rookie Seed Award and Flux Core won both the Rookie Inspiration Award and the Best-Looking Robot Award.

The Zero Gravity and Flux-Core teams gave a presentation describing their experience in the competition, complete with a demonstration of the game their robots played.

Scott Innocenzi, the chair of Science and Technology at Nottingham High School and a mentor to the Flux-Core team, had nothing but positive things to say about the FIRST Robotics Competition, calling it "wonderful all

around."

"It's wonderful to see students mature as they use creative thinking," said Innocenzi, whose own son was a member of the team.

Parent Colleen Callan also lauded the competition.

"The amount of confidence that came out of the children who participated was something I've never seen before," she said.

The ceremony concluded by honoring this year's Mercer Science and Engineering Fair winners for their innovative and interestingly named projects including "Do Dogs Have a Right Paw or Left Paw Preference?" as well as "Hot or Cold, How Attractive Am I?" and "If Seeds Should Not Smoke or Drink, Neither Should Unborn Babies."

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HAMILTON SUPERINTENDENT NEIL BENCIVENGO

