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Press release

Creative minds get together to solve sustainability challenge

2 September 2010

Sixty-one teams from across Mackay and regional districts got their heads together to battle it out in the 2010 Mackay Regional Opti-MINDS Creative Sustainability Challenge held recently.

The challenge, open to participants ranging from grade one to adult age, involved teams of up to seven people working together to solve a highly creative and complex problem using minimal resources and no outside help.

Rio Tinto Coal Australia's Hail Creek Mine Community Development Fund contributed \$25,000 to help organise and run the challenge.

Each team had to respond to one of three challenges - creating a universal language that could be spoken and understood by all living things; designing a 'tuna turner mechanism'; or creating a system to manage the earth's resources more equally across the globe.

The teams presented their solutions at the Holy Spirit College in Mackay in front of a panel of judges. Nine teams were selected to represent the Mackay district for the state challenge being held at the University of Queensland on 16 to 17 October.

Opti-MINDS Mackay regional director Kathy Steggles said the Mackay challenge – now in its 22nd year – celebrates innovation, talent, and creative problem solving abilities in the region.

"The challenge is about offering people the chance to test a whole range of skills, including team work, to come up with a highly creative and original solution to a problem," Ms Steggles said.

"Our goal is to get people to look beyond conventional achievement and understand that the pursuit of excellence knows no boundaries.

"Twenty-six schools from across Mackay and surrounding towns including Moranbah, Bowen, and Sarina took part, as well as an open division for university students, parents, teachers, and general members of the public."

Year 11 Holy Spirit College participant Mickayla Kliese said it was not the first time she had participated in the annual challenge.

"I love Opti-MINDS. It's great because all the ideas you have and the jokes you make can be used in your presentation," Ms Kliese said.

Year eight Holy Spirit College participant Liam Brown said he is keen to do it again next year.

"It was a great experience and heaps of fun, although quite challenging at times," Mr Brown said.

"Presentation day was great!"

Hail Creek Mine general manager operations Andrew Woodley said the challenge offers a stimulating learning opportunity for students and the wider community.

"The problems the participants had to solve were completely fictional, which immediately promoted creativity and made learning fun," Mr Woodley said.

“The challenge encourages people, especially our youth, to take a strong interest in their education and continue to build upon important life skills including analysing, researching, problem solving, presenting, teamwork, and communicating.

“It also builds confidence and encourages bonding and networking throughout all our local communities, which helps us build a stronger and more resilient region for the future.”

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Attached photo - Holy Spirit College Opti-MINDS team get ready for their presentation.

Left to right: Tayla Adams, Stella Trounson, Liam Brown, Zachary Trounson, and Jesse Matheson.

