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Editorial

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A celebration of young creativity

Innovation. Determination. Just plain smarts. All three were on display at this month's Young Entrepreneurs Academy's business plan competition — and local participants were well represented.

In fact, three are students — Robert Moon of Pittsford, Quynh “Gwen” Le of Gates Chili High School and Bobby Jones of Greece Athena High School — were cited as among the most creative.

The competition, held at the Henrietta campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology, saw local students pitching their business plans to a panel of judges — in three-minute presentations — in an effort to obtain funding for their products. Any youngster who can stand in front of a panel of suits and try to persuade them to fund a project they've never heard of has a lot on the ball.

Equally impressive: This isn't a mock competition; the kids are making the case for real money for real projects.

And there are scholarships on the line. And 25,000 people attended. Talk about pressure!

Still, innovation and a little intestinal fortitude were on display.

Robert Moon may be only 12, but he's already the CEO of the Alert Mind and the creator of a board game called Grid Greed, which helps players strengthen their math skills. The concept was good enough for second place, earning the Calkins Road Middle School 7th-grader a four-year scholarship of \$6,000 per year.

Equally impressive was 17-year-old Quynh “Gwen” Le, who snagged third place and a scholarship valued at \$5,000 per year over four years. She is the founder and CEO of Pursenalized by Quynh, a handbag outfitted with inner lights, the better to locate that stray tube of lipstick or pack of gum.

And finalist Bobby Jones knows the value of comfort. The 17-year-old senior's His Pillow Perfection company creates customizable pillows and cushions for home, work and the car.

This year's winner, for the record, was Matthew Brazeau, a senior from Lake Zurich High School in Lake Zurich, Ill., whose company, iBraz, has devised a cost-effective electric skateboard.

The Young Entrepreneurs Academy is an in-depth lesson in business practices. Students must commit to the nine-month program of weekly classes and three main events: The investor panel, a following-day “an innovation and creativity festival” called ImagineRIT, and a graduation ceremony.

More than that, the program is a celebration of creativity — and there's nothing wrong with that in the world of education.