



BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Lauren Creiman, (909) 833-9853

Bonita Unified Elementary School Cultivates the Next Generation of Altruistic Inventors at Fourth Annual ‘Shark Tank’

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Roynon Elementary students stepped into the world of invention and entrepreneurship during their fourth annual Shark Tank event on March 23, pitching creations designed to solve real-world challenges and improve the lives of others.

Inventions included the second place “Perpetual Motion Motor,” aimed at generating electricity for individuals with limited access to power, the third place “Anti-Scare,” a device designed to help peers respond to bullying in a safe manner, the “LEGO Brick-inator,” an organizational tool to help young builders keep track of pieces and reduce frustration, and the “Doggie Dome,” a harness attached to an umbrella that allows pets to comfortably relieve themselves in the rain.

“The goal is really to get those investigative juices flowing to get them to think about problems and solutions,” fifth-grade teacher and event coordinator Stacy Willetts said. “Getting them to think about an issue and how they could solve it and create something to help society is powerful.”

Taking first place was fifth-grader Brenden Garcia, whose invention “Book Patrol” – a book stand designed to help readers who have trouble maintaining their place on a page while reducing neck strain – was inspired by his own experience and desire to support others facing similar challenges.

Garcia stated that his research highlighted the widespread need for accessible reading tools, noting that according to World Health Organization statistics, more than a billion people worldwide experience vision impairments or conditions that can make reading difficult, inspiring his goal to design something that could make a meaningful difference.

“I also struggle with focusing on one line at a time, and I know people with dyslexia and other disabilities have trouble with learning and reading,” Garcia said. “That’s why I thought of them, people everywhere struggle with vision problems and disabilities, and I wanted to help them keep their place in books and grow in reading so they can grow in life.”

The annual event is the result of a months-long process that challenges students to think like engineers. Beginning with an “intent to invent,” students identify a real-world problem, research existing solutions, develop original designs and build working prototypes before presenting their ideas to classmates. Each class selects a finalist to advance to the Shark Tank showcase, where students pitch their inventions to District officials.

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Fifth-graders Donald Lyles, creator of the “Perpetual Motion Machine,” and Sorem Thurmond, creator of the “Scare Away,” joined Garcia on the podium for second and third place, respectively.

“Our students are already thinking like problem-solvers and changemakers,” Bonita Unified Superintendent Matt Wien said. “Events like this show them that their ideas have value and that they can use their creativity to improve the world around them. When students are given the chance to identify real challenges and design solutions, they begin to see themselves as capable of making a meaningful difference.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

BUSD_ROYNON_SHARKTANK1: Fifth-grader Brenden Garcia celebrates his first-place win with his mother at Roynon Elementary’s fourth annual “Shark Tank” showcase, where students are given an outlet to think creatively in ways that support their local community.

BUSD_ROYNON_SHARKTANK2: A Roynon Elementary School student showcases his invention, the “Lego Brick-inator,” designed as an organizational tool to help young builders keep track of pieces and reduce frustration.

BUSD_ROYNON_SHARKTANK3: Fifth-grader Brenden Garcia presented his invention designed to help readers who have trouble maintaining their place on a page while reducing neck strain, as his peers and family cheered him on.

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