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Necessity, creativity are the parents of these inventions



Tom Mahl / Chronicle

Angela Brewer shows off “The Backpack Organizer,” which won her a blue ribbon at the Invention Convention in Cleveland on Saturday.

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The Chronicle-Telegram

CLEVELAND — An electrical outage in Lorain last year set Pierce Morgan’s young imagination ablaze.

“The way it started was grandpa taped a flashlight to the desk,” said Pierce, a third-grader at Lorain’s Lakeview Academy who chooses his words — and his inventions — quite carefully.

That triggered Pierce’s questioning: “I didn’t like how, every year, we’d have frustrations with our cords on our Christmas tree lights.”

The result: Twinklers, a wireless, tangle-free version of Christmas tree lights that can be turned on and off with a remote.

Way cool, said judges at the first annual Cleveland Invention Convention held at the Great Lakes Science Center on Saturday.

So cool, in fact, that Pierce landed a \$500 college scholarship when his invention won first place in the category of Cleveland-area third-graders.

The gathering for young inventors was the first of its kind in the area, organized by the nonprofit Columbus-based group The Invention Convention.

Cleveland’s convention on Saturday featured entries from students in third grade and up from Cuyahoga, Lorain and Medina counties.

Pierce’s wireless Christmas tree light — about an inch long — is operated by batteries activated when a clip is attached to its base. The clip, in turn, includes a sensor activated by remote, and the little light can be attached to just about anything.

While it wasn’t an entirely working model, the idea was both feasible and practical and demonstrated obvious problem-solving.

Two other Lorain students also won first place and \$500 scholarships for their inventions: Lakeview Academy fourth-grader Celeste Sperry's "Triple Feeder," which feeds fish through the pump of a tank, and Irving Elementary fifth-graders Hiatt Hernoh and Danny Fortney's "Double Thermo Straw," which measures the temperature of hot cocoa before drinking.

Jerrie West, Invention Convention's promotions manager, said the most successful inventions are created by students solving everyday problems they experience in their own lives.

"If you're wondering what kids are thinking about, this is it," West said, waving her hands at more than 100 inventions on tables at the Science Center. "Sometimes, it's the simple things that do it."

Other inventions by Lorain-area students included "C-Spray," a liquid dose of Vitamin C mixed with Jell-O and red food coloring, created by Mariah Davies, 10, a fifth-grader at Lakeview Academy.

"I think I'd sell it for about \$15 a bottle," Mariah said, grinning.

Lakeview Academy fifth-grader Angelica Brewer, 10, invented "The Backpack Organizer" because she was tired of the mishmash of books and papers in her store-bought backpack.

"Oh, what a good idea," folks kept saying as they walked past Angelica's invention.

The parents of Pierce, Mariah and Angelica — like the parents of most of the children — said their offspring handled nearly every aspect of the inventions on their own.

"She's definitely a thinker," said Will Brewer, Angelica's father. "Ever since she's been in school, she's the kind that comes home, does her homework and everything without being told."

Saturday's contest also awarded 50 runner-up awards to a number of students — many of them from Lorain — though the names of the winners weren't available yet.

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