

Clay Middle School Wins Big at National TSA Competition

The Clay County Middle and High School TSA teams recently traveled to Dallas, Texas to compete in the National Technology Student Association Competition. They earned the right to compete at nationals based upon their success at the WV State Competition held in March. The groups traveled by bus nineteen hours to reach their destination. It was well worth the trip. Clay Middle came home with a national championship victory, a third-place trophy, and three top ten finalist honors.

At Nationals, nearly 6,000 students competed in over 70 events. Thirty-four states were represented, and students came from as far away as Germany to compete. The conference theme, Discover Your Journey, epitomized TSA's 44 years of intra-curricular activities, competitions, and other programs that provide students with opportunities for personal and leadership development and enhanced education and career exposure in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

For Clay Middle, seventh graders Ariel Dobbins and Juliann Gallaher won first place in the nation in STEM Animation. In this event, participants use computer graphics tools and design processes to communicate, inform, analyze, and/or illustrate a topic, idea, subject, or concept that focuses on science, technology, engineering, or mathematics, or some combination thereof. The theme for the event was "big data." The term refers to data that is so large, fast or complex that it is difficult or impossible to process using traditional methods. The act of accessing and storing large amounts of information for analytics has been around a long time. Dobbins and Gallaher were tasked to visualize the data process and its application in the current IT fields in the form of animation. Upon reaching the semi-finals based upon their animation and document portfolio, they presented their creation and were interviewed by contest judges.

Additionally, Jaxon Brown, Summer Corwell, Ilyauna Evans, Katie Price and Cadence Williams won third place for their Construction Challenge project. In this event, participants submit a scale model/prototype with a portfolio that documents the use of their leadership and technical skills to fulfill an identified community need related to construction. For its project, the group constructed a kiosk at Spread Park with a map indicating the distance between access points along Elk River to help kayakers navigate knowledgeably and safely. Upon reaching the semifinals, the students discussed their project in a presentation and were interviewed by judges.

Finally, Clay Middle also claimed top ten finalist honors by Jaxon Brown in Career Prep (6th place); Ilyauna Evans and Ariel Dobbins in Challenging Tech Issues (7th place); and Ariel Dobbins in Children's Stories (8th place).

Clay High School's TSA members also worked hard, submitted a number of high-quality projects, and skillfully competed in various presentation and testing competitions. However, at this level, the competition is fierce and unfortunately none advanced to the finals.

Jessica Ramsey is the TSA Chapter Advisor for the middle school and high school. She works tirelessly to help students prepare for their events, keeping them updated with contest rules and regulations, of which there are many, and staying after school throughout the year to supervise and advise while they work on their projects. She is also the chief TSA fundraiser, and she coordinates everything associated with trips to Cedar Lakes, WV each March for States, and to nationals in June. Her hard work and dedication are appreciated and do not go unnoticed. However, humbly, she is the first person to point out all the help she receives from the school board, school administrators, teachers, chaperones (including April Dawson, Clare Dawson, Elizabeth Gallaher, Barry Payton and Phil Dobbins at nationals) and parents. A special thanks also goes to David and Janeen Pierson and Pierson Lumber for their continuing support of TSA. Congratulations to Ms. Ramsey and her TSA teams. They represent the county well!