

VALLEY

Students' city of future wins regional competition

By KRISTI ALBERTSON
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A team of Flathead Valley Montessori Academy students won a regional competition Jan. 6 for Zeymous, their city of the future.

Next month, they'll pit their design against 37 other teams from across the country at the national finals in Washington, D.C.

Eighth-graders Kat Delby, Sam Watson and Brenton Tartaglino presented their model in Boise, Idaho, for the regional National Engineers Week Future City Competition.

Team size was limited to three, so seventh-grader Ellie Eberts, who also helped with the project, traveled

to Boise but served as the alternate.

They competed against 31 teams from Idaho, Oregon and Utah. Montessori was the only school from Montana at the competition.

For the past 15 years, the competition has challenged students to take a current issue — this year's focus was fuel cells — project it 150 years into the future and work out the logistics for an entire city.

The Montessori students researched every angle imaginable — energy source and delivery, transportation, food production, retail locations, home design, water and sewer systems, crime, education and more — then wrote two in-depth essays and produced the model city for a budget capped at \$100.

The result was Zeymous, an Icelandic fuel-cell-powered future city whose 200,000 residents capture the sea's energy to supply hydrogen for their fuel cells and grow and export organic vegetables.

"I think our team did a fantastic job," said Jeff Pernel, Montessori's head administrator. "They really shined in the question-and-answer section. They were able to really deal with the judges' questions in a professional manner, whereas some of the other teams struggled."

It helped that engineers from Semiool and Morrison-Materle Inc. grilled the students prior to the competition, Pernel said. The students were able to review what they needed to work

on before they traveled to Boise.

"It let them deal with the issues before it's an issue at the real competition," he said.

The judges were just as impressed with the realistic-looking model of the city as they were with the students' answers, Pernel added. "That really shined at the competition, too — the fact that they really put a lot of detail into it."

Their winning design earned them the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., for the chance to compete for the grand prize: a trip to Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala.

Nationals take place Feb. 17 through 22. The National Engineering Week Committee will

pay for airfare and hotel; students are responsible for meals and transportation when they arrive. Pernel's students will need money for sightseeing because they plan to stay a couple of days after the competition to tour Washington.

It will cost about \$5,500 in all, he said. To raise money, the school is hosting a spaghetti feed at 5 p.m. Jan. 18 at Montessori Willow Glen Elementary, 349 Willow Glen, in Kallispell.

The students will give a presentation about Zeymous after dinner. A PayPal account has been set up on the school's Web site, www.flatheadvalleymontessori.com, for anyone interested in donating. Donations also can be made at West One Bank.