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## Engineering And Entrepreneurship At Ithaca High School

Around Town Written by Mary Grainger



The IthacaSTEM Advocates, an affiliate of the Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI) has created an entrepreneurship component to the capstone pre-engineering class at Ithaca High School. With the help of community members, students have been taught and mentored as they develop a product idea before doing the research and design preparation for building a prototype. On December 18, students pitched their ideas to a panel of judges at the Business Idea Challenge Night held at Rev, the new business incubator in downtown Ithaca. The judges decided which teams would receive funding needed to buy supplies for their prototyping during the spring semester of EDD, Engineering Design and Development of the Project Lead the Way series of high school courses.

Six teams of students pitched the following ideas: MediMove for putting an auto-injector into a smartphone case, Full Cycle Bikes to use bikes to generate power in the developing world, Pump-Action Mods to improve the Nerf Retaliator for Humans vs. Zombies games, Lake Rake for a better hydrilla sampling solution, Human Power to create a wearable human-powered device to charge a smartphone, and The Plug Saver to protect grounding plugs on power tools to improve safety.

According to Illa Burbank, president of the IthacaSTEM Advocates and lead volunteer for this activity, community members worked with the students starting in October during class time. Teaching the basic principles of business plans were Brad Grainger of Cain Brothers Funding, Eric Eisenhut of Kensa Group, Brad Treat of Ithaca College, Dan Cohen of Cornell, and Tony Eisenhut of Rheonix. During the next two months, the six teams were mentored by Treat, Aaron Proujansky of Greengage, Brian Bauer of Rev, Bruce Lane of Purity Ice Cream, Chris Camadella of Vroom Consulting, Beth Mielbrecht at Taitem Engineering, and Burbank of Incodema.

Burbank elaborated that community members also supported students as field experts providing professional design advice in areas such as electrical and mechanical engineering. "Three Cornell students, Andrew Vaslas, Michael Walsh and Anthony McNicoll, demonstrated their own five-minute pitches to the Ithaca High students to provide a framework as they created their own pitches."



Judges on December 18 included Zach Shulman, Director of Entrepreneurship @ Cornell; Tim McCabe, TC3 Chair of Entrepreneurialism Department; Barbara Howard, Associate Dean of Ithaca College's business school; and Luvelle Brown, Ithaca City School District Superintendent.

All teams received a share of the available funding. Funds were contributed to IthacaSTEM by individuals and businesses specifically

for this purpose.

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