

Draft Media Release

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Budding scientists display their talent

If the standard of young talent exhibited at last week's Top Energy Far North Science & Technology Fair is anything to go by, the future of the sciences in New Zealand looks bright.

Sponsored by local electricity generation and lines network group, Top Energy, the Fair prize giving was held last Saturday, at The Centre, Kerikeri and was attended by a large audience of students, parents and supporters.

The Fair, which has apparently run in secondary schools for 31 years, is open to Years 7 - 13 students. It covers any area of science or technology and students are encouraged to choose a topic which involves investigation, challenge and imagination.

The Fair was held over three days with the students' work being judged on Thursday and exhibited to the public on Friday and Saturday morning. This year there were 150 entries from schools throughout the Far North.

The winner of the Junior Top Energy Excellence Award this year was Springbank School's Tim Richardson, for his project 'Kill the Spill'. Tim investigated the effectiveness of different materials, such as feathers and wool, for cleaning up oil spills using heavy motor oil as his source of oil. His work was very thorough and he carried out many trials in support of his findings.

Sarah Pirie, from Kerikeri High School, was the winner of the Senior Top Energy Excellence Award with her project called 'Should there be Modifications to Oyster Storage'. Sarah looked at finding out how long harvested oysters could be kept in their shells before their quality declined. She kept and studied oysters for different periods and at different temperatures and measured the extent of dehydration and the number of bacteria present in them. Her work could be important to the oyster industry as at present there is no industry standard for the storage length or temperature for harvested oysters.

Three students Sarah Pirie, Lena Barthlen Potter and Hammond Pearce, all from Kerikeri High School, have been nominated to submit their work for a place at "Realise the Dream" a prestigious event to be held at the end of the year for the top Science students in New Zealand. These students have to prepare a video of their work and submit their investigation, their log books and notes to a selection panel that will meet at the end of next month.

Top Energy Group CEO, Russell Shaw was on hand to congratulate all students and to present the awards. As well as the major prizes, there were 26 Merit Awards for quality work presented to students from most of the schools participating in the fair this year.

Says Shaw, "2010 is the 9th consecutive year that Top Energy has sponsored this event. We believe it's a wonderful, hands-on way to encourage our young people to take an interest in science and technology. And when I looked around at the amazing exhibits on display last week, I certainly got the feeling that many exhibitors have the ability to go on and make their mark in the world in science careers, if that's a path they decide to follow."

Shaw believes the Far North Science & Technology Fair is an effective learning programme that fits well with other educational initiatives his company sponsors in the Far North; WaterSafe - which teaches primary school children to swim and be safe around water; and Young Enterprise Scheme (YES) Northland, a year-long experiential business learning programme, where Year 11 - 13 students form start-up companies, become directors and follow their own business plans to develop products/services which they market and sell. END.

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Pics: Top Energy CEO, Russell Shaw presents the Senior Excellence Award to Sarah Pirie, from Kerikeri High School.



Springbank School's Tim Richardson, with his Junior Excellence Award winning 'Kill the Spill' project.