

Media Release

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Waitangi River mangroves study wows judges

Far North secondary school students, family, friends and enthusiastic onlookers gathered at 'The Centre' in Kerikeri last week for the 2009 Top Energy Far North Science & Technology Fair.

This year, the Fair attracted 130 entries from 10 Far North secondary schools.

Open to Years 7 through 13 students and covering any area of science or technology, students were encouraged to choose a topic which involved investigation, challenge and imagination.

Exhibitors were interviewed by Fair judges on Thursday 10th September and their exhibits were open to the public on Friday and Saturday morning. Exhibits judged the most deserving were recognised at a Prize Giving ceremony on Saturday evening, which was attended by a large crowd.

The winner of the Top Energy Overall Excellence Senior Prize was Corrine Marti, a Year 13 student at Kerikeri High School. Corrine investigated the effect of salinity on the transpiration rate of Mangroves in the Waitangi River. Her exhibit combined chemistry and biology investigations to look at how the rate of transpiration in Mangroves varied with the salinity of the water they were found in. Corrine tested five sites along the river and found there was less transpiration when the salinity was higher. She was also awarded the Statistics Prize for the quality of the statistical analysis of her results.

The Top Energy Overall Excellence Junior Prize winner was Kerikeri High School, Year 9 student, Bradley de Klerk. Bradley wants to play the drums, but not surprisingly the noise bothers his family and the neighbours. Trying to play quietly affected the feel of his playing and cramped his style, so he attached various materials to his drumsticks to dampen the noise. He was able to come up with a solution that enabled him to have quality practice without driving everyone mad.

David Blucher, a Year 13 student at Kerikeri High School was awarded the Northland Regional Council Study Award for his project on the Biological Control of Gorse by Spider Mites. He looked at whether the spider mite would attack other native vegetation such as Kowhai and found that the mite had no effect on the native trees and so could be an effective way of control gorse.

Top Energy Quality in Science and Technology Awards were also presented to Timothy Richardson, Jason Leaming and Elijah Angus of Springbank School and to Max Irving Lamb, Megan de Klerk, Kenton Baxter and Regan Polglaze of Kerikeri High School.

Top Energy CEO, Russell Shaw was on hand at the prize giving, to present the Overall Excellence and Quality Awards. "The Fair is an excellent way to promote science and technology to our young people and at the same time help them develop problem-solving life skills. And judging by the standard of the exhibits this year it's obvious students put a lot of thought, time and effort into their projects", he said.

Shaw believes the Far North Science & Technology Fair fits well with other experiential education programmes his company sponsors. These include the Nationally acclaimed WaterSafe Programme, which teaches Far North primary school children graduated learn to swim and survival skills to keep them safe around water and for the first time this year, a Northland-wide sponsorship of the Young Enterprise Scheme (YES), partnering with The Lion Foundation.

YES is part of the broader Education for Enterprise Programme the company has sponsored in the Far North for many years. Its purpose is to foster an enterprise culture in secondary schools, by focussing the curriculum in a way where students can see the relevance of their learning – and to help them develop into enterprising people. Year 11 through 13 students form start-up companies, become directors and follow their own business plans to develop products/services which they market and sell, throughout the year. END.

Contact: Top Energy CEO, Russell Shaw. Ph: 0-9 401 5622.