

Grants from Tri-Cities Technical Council helping area schools

The Tri-Cities Technical Council is wrapping up its fourth successful year of boosting interest in science and technology in local schools through its grant program.

The program has grown from distributing nine grants in its first year to distributing nearly 30 grants to more than 25 public and private schools in the Tri-Cities this past year. The grants, typically in the range of a few hundred dollars, go a long way toward helping area teachers purchase planning materials and tools for student learning.

Highlands Middle School teacher Mona Alzheimer used the \$300 grant she received from the technical council to purchase a K'NEX set, which is used to build contraptions called "machines" to demonstrate scientific principles.

"My kids were hooked," said Alzheimer. "By the time we were finished, they were describing how these machines worked, actually calculating simple mechanical-advantage problems."

Alzheimer's class took on the challenge of building the largest machine in the book, called the "Big Ball." Directions for that machine are spread out over 20 pages. She described her success in a thank-you letter to the Tri-Cities Technical Council. "The kids dove right in," she wrote. "My rule was that I would not help read the directions. I knew that they could do it. The motivator was the K'NEX set. Thank you for this fantastic tool. I have yet to meet a kid who isn't hooked on it."

"It's tremendously rewarding for all of the volunteers in the technical council to receive this kind of feedback and to know that their efforts are making a difference," said Pam Ankrum, chairwoman of the grant committee for Tri-Cities Technical Council. "The growth of the school grant program over the years is evidence of its success and the need for the community to support its schools, particularly in the area of developing interest in science and technology."

Ankrum also thanked the grant program's partners, Bechtel and CH2M HILL Hanford Group, for their contributions, as well as the following contributors to the program:

- American Chemical Society
- American Institute of Chemical Engineers
- American Nuclear Society, Eastern Washington Section
- American Society of Civil Engineers
- D. Hittle & Associates
- Fluor Federal Services
- Fluor Hanford
- Health Physics Society

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Students in a class at Highlands Middle School built mechanical machines such as the "Big Ball" pictured here, using a K'NEX set that was purchased using grant money from the Tri-Cities Technical Council. The council of Tri-Cities area technical professionals boosts interest in science and technology, in part through the nearly 30 grants to local schools for materials and learning tools.

Grants from Tri-Cities Technical Council helping area schools, cont.

- Information Matters
- International Council on Systems Engineering
- Washington Group International
- Washington Society of Professional Engineers.

The technical council is a non-profit coordination, communication and community-service vehicle for professional and technical societies in the Tri-Cities region. For more information about the council, Ankrum can be reached at 377-4513. ■