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Lake George Charter School team finishes third in statewide Future City competition

By MARIANNE MOGON

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Students from Lake George Charter School stand behind the city they designed. From left: Kaylee Geffre (8th Grade — homeschooled); Aci Henderson (7th grade); Eva Achord (6th grade); and Destin Stellter (5th grade). Not available for photo was Alex Norman (8th grade) and Gavin Strouse (8th grade — homeschooled).

Courtesy of April Achord

Six students from Lake George Charter School were collectively awarded third place in the 2022 statewide Future City competition.

Future City is a project-based learning program where students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades imagine, research, design and build cities of the future. Students are given the opportunity to do things required of engineers: identify problems; brainstorm ideas; design solutions; test; retest; build; and share the results.

This year's Future City challenge was to design a waste-free city that uses the principles of a circular economy. A circular economy requires shifting our systems and involving everyone and everything: businesses, governments and individuals; cities, products, and jobs.

A circular economy is based on three principles: designing plans for waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use; designing products and components to be reused, repaired and remanufactured; and regenerate natural systems. In nature there is no concept of waste. Everything is food for something else — a leaf that falls from a tree feeds the forest.

The students had to field several questions about their project, including: “What if we looked at waste as a design flaw?” And, “How can we use new materials and technologies to ensure that waste and pollution are not created in the first place?”

After building their city, the students had to write an essay and give a public presentation that answered more questions about circular economy.

“Our students went up against very large schools who had many resources at their disposal, said Lee Ann Wade, school administrator.

The team from Lake George Charter School was under the mentorship of Jennifer Geffre and Markyda VenRooy. The students devoted at least two nights a week and a minimum of 100 hours building their city. They designed streets with thermal energy, which heated the ground, keeping snow and ice off busy streets. They even melted down plastic to make horseshoes. The only mode of transportation in their city was horseback riding, bicycling and walking.

“Our community is very proud of these students for their initiative, creativity, and using whatever resources they had at hand,” Wade said. “They all expressed having a lot of fun and how interesting it was to design a city wherein there would be no waste to deal with. We encourage the community to come the school where it will be on display.”

The official award presentation will be scheduled at a later date.