

Pike Central Students receive Grant from MIT Program

By Mike Johansen

A group of Pike Central High School students have been selected to receive a grant from MIT to further their project and create a portable disaster relief shelter.

Pike Central High School was recently awarded a Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam grant in the amount of \$5,455 to create the portable relief shelter that incorporates a water purification system and natural energy sources for light. PCHS is one of 14 high schools from across the country to be selected as an InvenTeam this year.

InvenTeams are groups of high school students, teachers and mentors that receive grants up to \$10,000 each to invent technological solutions to real-world problems. Entering its eighth year, this initiative of the Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam program aims to inspire a new generation of inventors.

"The InvenTeams program represents the future," said Leigh Estabrooks, in-

vention education officer from the Lemelson-MIT program. "With STEM-focused projects from the Obama administration and leading organizations becoming more prevalent, it's important to maintain momentum and continue to inspire youth in these fields. With InvenTeams our primary goal is to foster high school students' passion for invention and innovation, in turn inspiring them to become leaders and mentors."

Ray Niehaus, PCHS Project Lead the Way instructor, initiated the InvenTeam application process last spring and attended training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in June to help prepare the final proposal. A panel of judges composed of educators and researchers from MIT and Harvard University, representatives from industry, MIT staff, MIT alumni; and former Lemelson-MIT award winners assembled this fall to select the winners and selected Pike Central as one of this year's InvenTeam grantees.

The PCHS InvenTeam is creating a light weight disaster relief shelter that is easy to assemble and disassemble while also being low cost. They are using plastic corrugated sheets for the walls and roof, and plastic extrusions for the corners and edges.

The Pike Central High School team will also work with Scott Willis, electrical engineer at the Crane Division of Naval Surface Warfare Center; and Sheryl Ring-Laakman, executive director of the Old Northwest Territory Chapter of the American Red Cross, to guide the students through the development of their invention.

"I am proud of these students and how well the project is coming together. It will be a benefit to humanity," said PCHS instructor Ray Niehaus.

Over the next nine months the Pike Central InvenTeam will develop its disaster relief shelter. In June the students will showcase a prototype of their invention at

EurekaFest at MIT in Cambridge, Mass. EurekaFest, presented by the Lemelson-MIT program, is a multi-day celebration designed to empower a legacy of inventors through activities that inspire youth, honor role models and encourage creativity and problem solving.

But for now, the Pike Central students are concentrating on getting their project completely designed and making it work.

The Lemelson-MIT InvenTeam program recognizes the outstanding inventors and innovators transforming the world and inspires young people to pursue creative lives and careers through innovation.

Jerome H. Lemelson, one of U.S. history's most prolific inventors, and his wife, Dorothy, founded the Lemelson-MIT Program in 1994. It is funded by the Lemelson Foundation and administered by the School of Engineering. For more information of the Lemelson-MIT Program, visit <http://web.mit.edu/invent>.