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**High-tech kids:
Hartman Podcasters win state award**

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ELLWOOD CITY - That a group of fifth and sixth-graders at Hartman School is teaching math to children around the world is remarkable. That they are winning first-place awards for their podcasting efforts is even more impressive.

The Hartman Podcasters, their youngest member, 10, their oldest, 12, attended the Pennsylvania Association for Educational Communications and Technology Showcase May 21 at the Capitol Rotunda in Harrisburg, where they received the Best Instructional Podcast award from the 2007 Kidcast Podcasting in the Classroom network and a \$2,500 grant from Best Buy.

"They deserve it," Frank Falotico, fifth-grade teacher and podcasting instructor, said.

Under the direction of Anna Dimeo and Falotico, and supported by Ellen Ruckert, technology coordinator for Ellwood City Area School District, the group includes Cheyenne Annarumo, Kristen Baney, Jenica Dismuke, Hanan Hammad, Iain McCormick Nicole Sapienza and Erik Sobel.

The podcasters have created a series of Internet shows that teach and test math concepts including angles and ratios; sales tax; mean, median and mode; and long division. Falotico said the podcasts are designed to make learning more interesting and fun.

Like television and radio broadcasting, the shows are podcasted over the Internet for anyone to view. Podcasts can be found on the Ellwood City Area School District's Web site at www.ellwood.k12.pa.us. Click on the "Podcasts" link, then "Concept Library" for concept-teaching videos.

Under the "Anchor" category, podcasters act out skits that end in a question that test each concept. Falotico said that answers are not given in the podcast, but his pupils submit their responses for grades.

Falotico said he first learned of podcasting during a conference in Hershey. He and Dimeo then attended a fourth-grade presentation of "Alice in Wonderland" searching for talent.

"We saw that these children were communicators and that they weren't afraid of an audience," Falotico said. "Seven months later, we were in Harrisburg displaying our podcasts."

Falotico said that when he first presented the idea to then fourth-grader Kristen Baney, she responded with, "What's a podcast?"

Podcasting is not part of pupils' daily curriculum Falotico said. Podcasters spend time before and after school developing their shows. They brainstorm their script, act it out, film it, download it, edit it, and add music.

"We did it because we get to be on the Internet," Annarumo said.

The Hartman Podcasters received a personal invitation from Jim Gates, president of the Pennsylvania Educational Technology Expo and Conference, to travel to Hershey next school year to demonstrate their use of technology in the classroom to educators and administrators from around Pennsylvania.

"(Gates) said he never met a group of kids that could explain the beginning, middle and end process of podcasting so well," Falotico said.

The podcasters said they have enjoyed their experience.

"We get to go to a lot of places like Harrisburg, Hershey and McDonald's," Sobel said.

"The students are learning to conduct themselves professionally, to communicate clearly, and how to take constructive criticism and learn from it," Dimeo said.

George Garda, principal of Hartman School, said that he is impressed with the group.

"Podcasting is putting us on the cutting edge," Garda said. "We have been able to accomplish things that larger districts haven't been able to do."

Dimeo said she and Falotico plan to add more students to the podcasting group and that the current podcasters will train those who are new to the program.

"We want to integrate the program into school hours, and we will include as many students as we can," Dimeo said.

The Hartman Podcasters said they understand the importance of their accomplishments.

"I think it's pretty cool to teach kids around the world," Sapienza said.

Falotico said upcoming podcasting projects will include filming the Ellwood City Memorial Day parade and Lincoln's commencement ceremony.

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