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Ryan Young, a sixth-grader at Corwin International Magnet School, shows off the goggles he wore while melting bismuth during the Pueblo City Schools (D60) Science and Engineering Fair.

STUDENT EXPO

Science is Central part of education

Hundreds show off inventive handiwork

BY JON POMPIA
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

If you were curious about powering a battery with fruit, making a batch of “glitter slime” or the effects of heat on bismuth, Central High School was the place to be Friday.

Friday afternoon, more than 225 scientific-minded students in grades 3 through 12 proudly displayed their inventive handiwork as the 15th annual Pueblo City Schools (D60) Science and Engineering Fair (magnetically) attracted hundreds of proud guardians and siblings to the noted STEM Magnet School.

Sponsored this year by Black Hills Energy, Bechtel Pueblo Team and Xcel Energy, the expo offered



Aubrie Ruyle, a fourth-grader at Heroes Academy, demonstrates her experiment, which shows the different densities of various liquids.

students the opportunity to not only display and explain their creations but compete for prizes, including special awards presented by the sponsors.

Additionally, top-finishing secondary level students are eligible to compete at the Feb. 23 Southern Colorado Regional Science Fair at Pueblo Community

College, with a chance to advance to state and international fairs. And based on the imaginative and well-researched quality of this year’s entries, judges

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certainly faced a task of, well, Newtonian proportions.

Whether the joys of flaming candy, the most absorbent brand of diapers, the ways to block a Wi-Fi signal or the quease-inducing amount of grease in french fries, these young scholars had the market on inventive investigation cornered.

For safety-goggles-wearing Ryan Young, a sixth-grader at Corwin International Magnet School, the mysteries of bismuth — a white, brittle metal — were just too enticing not to explore.

“The reason I chose bismuth is because I missed a certain episode of ‘Steven Universe,’ my favorite show, that was about bismuth,” Ryan explained. “And when I looked up the episode,

SEE SCIENCE, 8A

SCIENCE/from page 6A

I saw a video on how to melt bismuth.”

And so began the quest to turn the plain metal into all kinds of interesting shapes and colors.

“What most people don’t realize is that bismuth is rainbow-like once it undergoes a molecular change,” Ryan explained as he held aloft a Technicolor piece. “When I melted it, it destabilized the crystal structure, which actually becomes stronger.”

The flammability of her 2-year-old brother’s pajamas set Kyla Zamora, a seventh grader at Pueblo Academy of the Arts, on a quest to discover exactly what material is most fire-retardant.

“I wanted to see how

Lyliah Jaber, a seventh-grader at Pueblo Academy of Arts, dissects a cow’s eye as part of the special activities offered during the fair.

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CHRIS MCLEAN



safe my brother’s pajamas are,” Kyla said. “So I tested four fabrics, some flame resistant and some non-flame resistant.”

At the experiment’s conclusion, Kyla learned

that the most resilient material, cotton flame resistant, had one drawback.

“I don’t think they make pajamas in it,” she said.

As an added, mind-ex-

panding bonus, this year’s event featured a collection of interactive hands-on displays that allowed students — and adults, as well — the chance to run a robot, operate a computer, take part in an eye dissection ... even pet an adorable rabbit.

“It’s to raise awareness of what STEM actually is — putting something tangible to what it is, looks like and feels like,” said Morganlee Kempf, who, along with Paula Herrera, coordinated the fair. “While the projects are being judged, we wanted to give the students and visitors a hands-on way to experience what the fair is all about.”

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