



Florida Junior Academy of Science

A Division of the Florida Academy of Sciences

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2015 FJAS Competition

For the 2014–2015 school year, seven chapters renewed their affiliation and a new chapter joined with a total of 283 members. There were also 11 individual members for a total of 294 members. Of these 128 students submitted papers to the preliminary competition. Eighty students were initially invited to present at the 2015 competition. When cancellations were received an additional 10 students were invited to present based on their scores from the judges of the preliminary competition. Once again many students did not follow the guidelines for submitting their papers which may have prevented their papers being selected. The most common problems that caused students to lose points were:

- Generic attachment name (FJAS paper is not appropriate, use a few key words of the paper title)
- Student's name, school, or mentor's name appears in the paper or in attachment file name
- Papers exceeded the 2MB size – these were sent back to be corrected, but delayed acceptance or figures were deleted from the file prior to sending it on to the judges.

Many judges and myself have limits on our inbox and large files are not always accepted.

Seventy-one students presented their research at St Leo University in Saint Leo on March 21, 2015. This competition would not be possible without the help of many people. Our thanks go to:

- Saint Leo University for allowing us to use their facilities
- Iain Duffy and Darin Bell who arranged the use of the facilities and secured Saint Leo staff and students to help with the preliminary judging, Saint Leo judging, moderating, providing the Judges' lunch and other assistance
- Florida Academy of Sciences Council members for providing judges for both the preliminary judging and a moderator for the Saint Leo competition
- Jeremy Montague, President, and Jenny Bouchard of Florida Academy of Sciences
- Patricia Zalo, FJAS Director
- American Heritage, Presidential Chapter for providing snacks for students and help with ceremony
- Pine Crest, Vice-Presidential Chapter for providing beverages and moderators
- Judges for their time and expertise
- FJAS sponsors who encourage students in scientific research and competitions
- Parents of FJAS members who support their children in their pursuits
- FJAS members for participating in research and presentations
- Volunteers who stepped forward to moderate the sessions

Business Meeting included introduction of volunteers

During last year's business meeting Patricia Zalo mentioned that she needed help and two people contacted her. Leya Joykuty and Kannan Nagarajan introduced themselves and expressed their desire to assist with the leadership of FJAS. Patricia Zalo asked for comments from the FJAS members concerning the change of leadership before the Florida Academy of Sciences meets in June. Brigitte Blanco of Pine Crest who won the scholarship to AJAS was unable to attend the FJAS competition so Ms Gordinier, the chaperon to AJAS, read her letter of appreciation. The highlights of the conference which is held in conjunction with the American Association for the Advancement of Science include a presentation similar to FJAS or participation in a round table discussion and a poster presentation for AAAS. Carson Coggeshall, Genevieve Selden, Elizabeth Feldman and Alan Koolik who were nominated for AJAS also shared their experience at AJAS/AAAS. This opportunity is available to students in 11th grade who compete at FJAS. Applications were available during the Awards Ceremony and are due September 1st.

In addition, the students attending the State and the International Science & Engineering Fairs were recognized and applauded. Patricia Zalo also gave Certificates of Appreciation to Matthew Dardet, Hunter Fields, Alec Gugel, and Nicole Maharaj of Pine Crest and Kathleen McCoy who moderated sessions. During the Business Meeting Pine Crest was elected as the Presidential Chapter and American Heritage as the Vice Presidential Chapter for the 2015-2016 school year.

2015 FJAS Competition Results

Middle School Biology

- 1st – Omar Shareef of Saint Edwards
- 2nd – Ritka Jeloka of Stone
- 3rd – Pooja Shah of Stone
- 4th – Hemangi Rajpal of American Heritage

Middle School Environmental Science

- 1st - Samantha Seecharan of Stone
- 2nd - Ally Vernich of Stone
- 3rd – Kim Ciarcia of Stone
- 4th – Trishala Kumar of American Heritage

Middle School Physical Sciences

- 1st - Rachel Dowell of Research Coast
- 2nd – Josiah Avery of Olivet
- 3rd – Brendon Harcourt of Stone
- 4th – Ryan Khan of Stone

High School Behavioral Sciences

- 1st - Antares Tobelem of American Heritage
- 2nd – Kathryn Richards of Sarasota

High School Literary

- 1st – Andre Radensky of Pine Crest
- 2nd – Matthew Merrigan of Pine Crest

High School Biological Sciences

- 1st – Dylan Burgin of Sarasota
- 2nd – Michael Varnerin of Pine Crest
- 3rd – Carly Crump of Episcopal
- 4th – Sana Shareef of Saint Edwards

High School Environmental Sciences

- 1st – Jonathan Mirchandani of American Heritage
- 2nd – Rebecca Elsishans of Sarasota
- 3rd – Nhu Le of Sarasota
- 4th – Andre Royce of Episcopal

High School Medical Sciences

- 1st – Natalie Olson of Sarasota
- 2nd – Rachel Levy of David Posnack
- 3rd – Nithya Kasarla of American Heritage
- 4th – James Salvador Niffenegger of Pine View

High School Physical Sciences

- 1st – Malini Basu of Pine Crest
- 2nd – Elizabeth Donoway of Pine Crest
- 3rd – Logan Track of Sarasota
- 4th – Teerth Patel of Sarasota

In addition to the place awards, the following students were recognized by the judges for their outstanding presentations:

Morgan Barney of Stone

Gauri Kasarla of American Heritage

Nicole Odzer of Pine Crest

Carson Coggeshall of Pine Crest

Caroline Nolan of Jensen Beach

Ian VanArsdall of Sarasota

Congratulations to SSEF Winners

The 60th State Science & Engineering Fair was held at Lakeland Center March 31 – April 2, 2015 where 19 of the FJAS presenters also competed. Of these students 16 placed representing 84% while only 48.4% of the students with individual projects who didn't compete at FJAS won place awards. All nineteen were recognized on stage for their projects. Congratulations to:

First Place: Carly Crump of Episcopal, Elizabeth Donoway of Pine Crest, Rebecca Elsishans of Sarasota, Andre Royce of Episcopal, Omar Shareef of Saint Edwards and Sana Shareef of Saint Edwards

Second Place: Kim Ciarcia of Stone, Elizabeth Feldman of Pine Crest, Nithya Kasarla of American Heritage, and Ally Vernich of Stone

Third Place: Dylan Burgin of Sarasota, Gauri Kasarla of American Heritage and Natalie Olson of Sarasota

Fourth Place: Zara Joykutty of American Heritage, Suganth Kannan of American Heritage and Carson Poltorack of Pine Crest

Honorable Mention: Nicole Odzer of Pine Crest

Recognition Awards: Jonathan Mirchandani of American Heritage and Caroline Nolan of Jensen Beach

The 2016 FJAS competition will be held at the St Petersburg campus of the University of South Florida on March 19th. We hope to see you there.