

Invention Convention to debut at COSI on May 23

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ThisWeek Contributor

Young innovators will present inventions such as "Taco Tape," "Backseat Buddy" and "The Super Nutrition Nanny" at the 13th annual Invention Convention on Saturday, May 23.

COSI Columbus, 333 W. Broad St., will host the convention for the first time. COSI's public relations manager Kelli Nowinsky said, "We're excited. It's a perfect fit."

"COSI is the most appropriate venue in Columbus," said Cherylyn Rushton, executive director of the project. "It's the center of innovation."

COSI is a longtime board member and community partner for Invention Convention.

Participants were selected as the top student inventors from throughout central Ohio. A total of 357 inventors will present 260 original prototype inventions to a panel of judges, competing for the grand prize "Edison Award," a \$2,500 college scholarship.

Sixty winners will receive a variety of prizes, including \$500 scholarships, \$50 savings bonds and the Kid's Choice Award.

The competition is open to students in kindergarten through eighth grade, and aims to foster a spirit of creative problem-solving. Participants must present an invention journal documenting their creative process, as well as a model of the invention.

Models do not have to work, but must illustrate the invention's concept.

Judges evaluate entries based on originality, problem-solving, inventiveness and communication.

Rushton said two things make the Invention Convention stand alone. "It's not a science fair; the focus is on creativity, and it's open free to any child in kindergarten to eighth grade."

She said that some of the best inventions have come from the youngest participants: "Creativity is greater at a younger age. There are no boundaries because they haven't yet been told they can't. They don't give up, and they're the most positive."

Past Invention Convention winners have received national recognition. Lisa Wright, a 1999 winner from the Northland area, has a provisional patent on her self-extinguishing Wright Candle invention, and was inducted into the National Gallery for America's Young Inventors.

Winners also have made television appearances on shows such as "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" and "The Ellen DeGeneres Show."

At about 3 p.m., Invention Convention areas will be open for public viewing.

Visitors also will be able to check out COSI's new exhibit, the "Innovation Showcase." The exhibit constantly changes, recognizing innovators from central Ohio.

"We hope it will spark more excitement and imagination in terms of seeing what is going on right here in Columbus," Nowinsky said. "One of the participants could be in the Innovation Showcase next."

In 2006, convention organizers launched a state expansion plan, aiming to host individual competitions in all regions of Ohio. Eventually, all regions will compete at a state finals event in Columbus.

"We're happy to have remained stable this year. In this economy, that's a win," Rushton said. "We retained all of our sponsors."

Invention Convention is offered to area students at no charge, through the contributions of presenting sponsors Battelle and *ThisWeek* Community Newspapers.

College Advantage, Ohio's 529 savings plan, returns as the official scholarship provider.

Supporting sponsors include Donatos, Honda of America, Huntington Bank, The J.E. Grote Co., The Kroger Co., Limited Brands Foundation and *The Columbus Dispatch* and Wolfe Associates.

Individuals or corporations can donate online at www.just-think-inc.com, using a new fundraising tool that launched May 6.

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