

Local Students Come for Zooming Out Conference

May 13, 2009

Students from around the Brazos Valley came to Texas A&M last week to share their projects in Zooming Out for a Global View, Global Issues Conference sponsored by the Office of International Outreach, the European Union Center and the Education Department of the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.

Academy of Future International Leaders Lara Speights, a junior from Mexia, and Corene Sullivan, a junior from San Antonio worked with Martha Green, program coordinator for educational activities in the Office of International Outreach to organize the conference as their project for the Academy Class.

"These two young women did an outstanding job of communicating with teachers and students, securing the keynote speaker and training the thirty student volunteers who acted as facilitators during the discussion portion of the program," Green said.

This year's Zooming Out Conference began with mountains of kolaches and the commotion of more than one hundred fifty students awaiting the presentation from Dr. John Poston the conference Keynote speaker.

Poston, Professor of Nuclear Engineering and Texas A&M's own health physicist, engaged the students with his Geiger counter hovering over a plate of chocolate chip cookies displayed on a fiesta plate that set off the counter's tickers. He explained that the problem was not in the cookies, but in the glaze used on the plate. Poston continued to demonstrate the wide use of radiation used to make everyday items, leaving his audience interested and much more aware of nuclear energy.

The students participated in roundtable discussions of global issues facilitated by Texas A&M students volunteers. Students discussed everything from piracy to global warming.

"All of the facilitators were content with their small groups and excited because of the innovative ideas their students – the leaders of tomorrow – had put forth," student coordinator, Speights said.

After the discussion session the middle and high school students stood in the midst of their projects and poster boards, eager to engage other students in their global issues. The featured project submissions, covering a myriad of topics, including social and environmental issues offered students a peek at what their peers discovered as problems with local impact that could be "zoomed out" to a larger global issue.

After a feast of pizza, middle and high school students reconvened in the auditorium to hear summaries of the best of the projects in presentation made by the students. Speights and Sullivan gave closing remarks, thanking the Conference sponsors and congratulating all the students on their projects and awarding the winners of each grade for their covering global water crisis, space junk, national food recalls, global energy, and piracy.