

EARTH DAY CONTEST

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By Beth LaMontagne Hall

Parkside student wins city's earth Day poster contest

❖ **Award: The judges were so impressed with McLaughlin Middle School's submission, students won a special prize for creativity.**

MANCHESTER – Lots of catchy slogans encourage young people to recycle, save energy and treat the environment better, but it was Parkside Middle School Student Anko Yai's slogan that won over the judges in the city wide Earth Day poster contest.

Yai's poster told students to "save the Earth, for what it's worth." It showed a large pair of hands holding a lush Earth with a tree, a rainbow and butterflies floating away from the land.

The poster was selected from more than 3,000 created by the city's middle school students for the Earth day mascot and poster contest. Yai's victory not only brings Parkside bragging rights. As part of the prize, Yai wins a trophy, and her team wins a Mimio interactive projector system, allowing teachers to use technology more actively in the classroom.

Award were given out this week and the next. Hillside Middle School's winning students received their award on Friday, and McLaughlin Middle School students will get theirs on Wednesday. The contest was put on by the Manchester School District and Aramark, which has a contract with the city to work on energy-efficiency projects.

"We wanted something that would get the kids' attention and would be meaningful, so we asked them to develop a mascot the city could use to promote sustainability and conserving energy," said Jeffrey Myrdek of Aramark. The mascots were to represent what sustainability and environmental conservation meant to them.

Aramark donated the art materials for the posters, which the students worked on during the week of Earth Day. Art and science teachers collaborated on how to use the project as part of the curriculum, teaching students about the creation of the United States National Parks System and important environmentalist activists. Three students from each grade were selected at each middle school, and those choices were whittled to the three best school-wide for the display at City Hall. The posters are now being shown in City Hall, thanks to help from the Manchester Arts Commission.

"The judges had a very, very hard time. There were a lot of ideas", said Myrdek. The choice was so difficult, the judges awarded McLaughlin Middle School a special prize for creativity and will be throwing a pizza party on Wednesday. Instead of creating just posters, students also came up with full costumes for their mascots. Nick Beall, who created Mr. Solar Panel, took the school's top prize. The school also was recognized for creativity incorporating its English language learners. Because the students were scheduled to go on a field trip the day of the judging, the EL students recorded a short story in English about their mascot and played it for the judges next to a mannequin wearing the outfit they designed for their mascot.

Myrdek said while this was the first time Aramark did an Earth day contest, he hopes it becomes a tradition. "It's always good to have a little completion so that people can show pride in their schools," said Myrdek.