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Twin Rivers Students Win SMUD Youth Energy Summit

Four upbeat and business savvy Grant Union High School students will each receive a \$1,000 scholarship after their team took first place in SMUD's fifth annual Youth Energy Summit (YES).

Edward Ozeruga, Kianni Ledezma, Deshawn Block and Brenda Phrakonekham are part of Grant's Environmental Science and Design Academy. Their award-winning project involved starting a business called Vermi-Post, and creating a composting system from recycled materials and using worms to breakdown food waste into usable organic fertilizer.

The students presented their project to a panel of judges April 26 on the north steps of the State Capitol.

"The preparation for our business and the competition was long and hard," says Phrakonekham. "It became very frustrating and time consuming, but the business plan came together. First place is the greatest feeling ever."

Seventy-five students from 15 Sacramento and Lodi area schools took part in the event. The Grant team worked on their project for three months. The goal was to produce a "fun, affordable, home-friendly composting system that's easy to use." Plans are in the works to sell the Vermi-Post system for \$39.95 beginning next school year. Part of the proceeds will go to scholarships for students in the program; the rest will be reinvested in the business and will also benefit a local charity.

"This group of students has the unique combination of academic ability, interpersonal skills, and a positive work ethic necessary for an effective team," says Arron White, coordinator of the Environmental Science and Design Academy. "When required they made the necessary sacrifices to produce a viable sustainable business plan. I am very proud of their hard work and the success that resulted from their efforts."

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Twin Rivers Unified School District serves approximately 27,000 preschool through adult education students in northern Sacramento County.

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