

# Budding scientists demonstrate abilities at SIUE during Science and Engineering Research Challenge

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EDWARDSVILLE - Approximately 250 budding scientists filled the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Meridian Ballroom on Saturday, March 18 for the regional Science and Engineering Research Challenge (SERC), coordinated by the SIUE STEM Center. [View a video of the event here.](#)

“My project is electromagnetism,” said Logan Jesse, a seventh grade student from Zion Lutheran School in Belleville.

“I love environmental science,” added Abril Hunter, a high school sophomore at Belleville’s Governor French Academy.

The room was abuzz as students, grades 5-12, presented their research to volunteer judges with a range of expertise in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

“I made four big electromagnets and a maglev, and my test was to see how you can make an electromagnet stronger, and which one would be stronger under different components,” Jesse explained.

The students’ natural curiosity and pursuit of new knowledge culminated into hundreds of projects featuring a wide variety of topics such as microbiology, electronics, consumer science, environmental science, mathematics and more.

“We get all of the top contenders from the school fairs in the area,” said Colin Wilson, manager of the SIUE STEM Resource Center. “At this competition they get a taste of what it’s like to be a scientist. They come to a conference, have a poster, present their topic and answer questions. We get a lot of positive feedback from Metro East schools, that SIUE is a hub for the area that is encouraging STEM excitement in this age group.”

The event promoted independent critical thinking and encouraged students to use the scientific method to answer a research question, carry out experiments and write their results.

“I’ve always wondered, what could be the best insulator?” explained Xavier Oyer, a sixth grade student from Liberty Middle School in Edwardsville. “I had a control container, one filled with newspaper, one filled with woodchips and one filled with felt, and then I put ice cubs on the inside. I found that newspaper worked the best out of the insulators, I think because it trapped all of the air pockets.”

“A number of students chose projects related to some question or personal interest of theirs, which was exciting to see,” said volunteer judge Ben Greenfield, PhD, assistant professor in the SIUE Environmental Sciences and Biological Sciences Programs.

The students' abilities were showcased to the judges, and their research achievements were celebrated by supporters.

"I don't think she realized how much she enjoys science," said Allen Jesse, whose daughter Logan eagerly participated in the SERC. "She did 98 percent of this on her own, so I'm real proud of her. She's already looking forward to next year. She's got three or four more ideas."

Twenty-four winners from the SIUE regional are advancing to the state competition. Devin Harris and Dylan Hall of Collinsville High School earned top prize and an all-expense paid trip to compete at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Los Angeles.

Other first place finishers included Rebecca Thomas, of Liberty Middle School, in the Junior Division, and Pranav Upadhyayula, of the Illinois Math and Science Academy, in the Senior Division. For a complete list of results, visit [siue.edu/stem](http://siue.edu/stem).

The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville [Center for STEM Research, Education and Outreach](http://siue.edu/stem) comprises an independent group of researchers and educators, innovating ways to engage students and the public in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Within the SIUE Graduate School, the Center brings together research faculty, graduate students and practitioners to conduct education research. The Center contributes educational expertise to SIUE undergraduate classes and provides professional development for K-12 teachers. The Center boasts a significant library of equipment and resources, which are available for loan at no cost to campus and regional instructors. For more information, visit [siue.edu/stem](http://siue.edu/stem) or contact STEM Center Director Sharon Locke at [\(618\) 650-3065](tel:6186503065) or [stemcenter@siue.edu](mailto:stemcenter@siue.edu).