

"It will make you want to hurl": 10th Annual Trebuchet contest brings bright minds to LCCC

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April 8 2017 8:01 AM





GODFREY - On Friday, seven incredibly bright teams from high schools around the region headed to Lewis and Clark Community College's River Bend Arena for the 10th Annual Trebuchet Competition. The battle between schools would simply "make you want to hurl."

"Hurling," in this instance, is not something to turn your nose from or gag about. In fact, these students, along with their team coaches, were inspired by medieval military machinery used to throw objects with great force across battle fields. These items could siege castles by tossing large rocks, dead animals or even flaming piles of manure to their enemies. Though they were using these trebuchets with non-violent purposes, the exercise is a fantastic way to demonstrate their knowledge of STEM-related activities while working collaboratively to build the most effective designs and execute their trebuchets with success.

"This is a program to try to encourage high school students to generate their interest into STEM fields," said LCCC math professor Kevin Bodden. "I really think it's a great opportunity to get hands on experience, applying what they are learning in class. They can see it's not just textbook work and can actually be used in practice.

"It's great to see that these teams are about 50 percent female this year, as normally, we're lucky to see only about 20 percent."

Though the history of the machinery themselves is stems from may be considered quite "old school" compared to the high-end technologies our military uses today, the science behind these designs are grounded in the principles of physics. In layman's terms, these devices demonstrate the effects of weights dropped over a short distance to then project an item over a long distance.

"One thing I liked about the competition was all the trial and challenges we came across," said Emily Strubel, a student from Carrollton High School. "We overcame them and fixed our problems. It was cool to see how all the other design's launched and what worked and what didn't."

Jersey Community High School's team, French Toast Mafia, took first place. Edwardsville High School's Tray-bucket United team took second while East Alton-Wood River's The Meme Team took third.



