

# Science and Engineering Research Challenge at SIUE features budding scientists

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EDWARDSVILLE - Natural curiosity and the pursuit of new knowledge were featured at the regional [Science and Engineering Research Challenge](#) (SERC) hosted by the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Center for STEM Research, Education and Outreach on Saturday, March 24.

Approximately 200 local 5-12<sup>th</sup> grade students filled the Meridian Ballroom to showcase their abilities and present to volunteer judges their research projects that ranged in topic from memory studies and emergency response drones to remediation filters and blood spatter analysis.

“The Science and Engineering Research Challenge fosters excitement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and offers students a taste of what it’s like to be a scientist,” said Colin Wilson, SIUE STEM Resource Center manager. “The competition promotes independent critical thinking and encourages students to use the scientific method to answer a research question, carry out experiments and write their results.”

SERC participant Breanna Goyea, a sophomore at Governor French Academy in Belleville, aspires to work in medicine and is especially interested in environmental science.

“This has been a cool experience,” said Goyea. “I tested different forms of biomass to see which one would produce the most methane gas. I did this as a method to see how we could produce cleaner energy, especially for people in third world countries.”

On the other side of the row from Goyea, Waterloo High School sophomore Charlie Dake told the judges about his project that considered the effect of social media use on interpersonal communication skills.

“I like discovering and learning new things,” Dake explained. “I definitely enjoy the social and behavioral sciences, so this was a great opportunity to learn about how people communicate.”

Rachel Anderson and Riley Dickey, both sophomores at Maryville Christian School, credited their science teacher Miss Crow for keeping them interested in science and instilling a desire to learn more.

“We called our project, ‘If you can smell it, you can taste it,’” said Dickey. “We studied the effect of smell on the taste that you perceive from what you’re eating.”

They had 20 students try different Pringles® flavors for their project.

“Participants did three trials,” Anderson explained. “One with nothing in their nose, one with a cotton ball in their nose, and a third with peppermint oil on the cotton ball in their nose. It was a fun project!”

Twenty-four winners representing 22 projects from the SIUE regional are advancing to the state competition. The state representatives include:

- Sam Berkley, Abril Hunter, David Sherrod, Courtney Smith, John Stewart and Aiden Trukenbrod of Governor French Academy
- Kolten Ackerman of Edwardsville High School
- Selin Aktuna, Ella Feldman, Alex Sundar and Rebecca Thomas of Liberty Middle School
- Caleb Chu, Keturah Steele and Rhiannon Smith of Maryville Christian School
- Lillie Cuddeback and Marlaina Graney of Good Shepherd Lutheran School
- Charlie Dake of Waterloo High School
- Gabe Lewis of Waterloo Junior High School
- Reagan Guerra of Metro East Lutheran High School
- Joseph Hanger of Red Bud Elementary
- Luke Hatlee and Levi Hatlee of Gillespie Middle School
- Olivia Kratschmer and Leah Rowland of St. Ambrose School

“With so many students, parents and family members on campus, this event highlights SIUE as a pillar in the community and emphasizes its academic distinction,” Wilson said. “The event builds relationships between the University and local educators, promoting future collaborations that support these students who may go on to study in STEM fields and become future industry professionals.”

The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville [Center for STEM Research, Education and Outreach](#) 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 <https://www.siu.edu/stem/about.shtml> or contact STEM Center Director Sharon Locke at (618) 650-3065 or [stemcenter@siue.edu](mailto:stemcenter@siue.edu)