

# WORLD'S OUT OF THE BOX

by Peter Reilly

## Three Sanford schools compete in the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals

A mind is a wonderful thing to test. And students from Sanford Middle School, Millennium Middle School, and Seminole High School did just that when they competed against teams from around the globe in the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals at Michigan State University.

Our local kids matched wits with the planet's brainiest competitors and scored incredibly well in their divisions. Millennium came in third in the world, Seminole High School came in seventh, and Sanford Middle came in 18th.

If you're unfamiliar with Odyssey of the Mind (OTM), it is a worldwide educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. Teams of five to seven participants are encouraged to think not just outside the box, but outside the room the box is in.

Children on teams from the United States and approximately 25 other countries participate in the program each year. Teams advance by scoring near the top in local, regional, and state competitions. More than 800 teams competed at this year's World Finals. Each team had to choose one of five problems to solve:

**VEHICLE** -- Teams build and operate vehicles of various sizes and power sources.

**TECHNICAL** -- Teams make innovative contraptions and incorporate artistic elements into their solutions.

**CLASSICS** -- Teams present their own interpretation of a literary classic.

**STRUCTURE** -- Teams design and build structures using balsa wood and glue and then test those structures to determine how much weight they can hold.

**PERFORMANCE** -- Teams present a performance that is based on a theme and incorporates required elements.

### SANFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL



The Sanford Middle School team, coached by Tracy Larson, came in 18th out of 65 in Division II. They also tackled a performance problem. The team performed a silent movie with an aquatic theme. It featured a fiddler crab director, an anemone critic, a mermaid villain, a rock-star fish singer, a blue-ringed octopus, a cowfish, and a lionfish. Coach and team were pleased to make it into the Top 20.

"It felt amazing to accomplish something that we had been working toward for five years," says Sanford Middle eighth grader Evelyn Larson.

The students also learned about themselves and found out they had a lot in common with competitors from other countries.

"I was able to interact with so many creative kids," says Elyse Larson, Evelyn's sister.

Elyse spoke for all of the students when she added: "Going to the Odyssey of the Mind world competition was the greatest thing. The experience was downright amazing."

**"I was able to interact with so many creative kids... [It was] downright amazing."**

- Elyse Larson from Sanford Middle School

### SEMINOLE HIGH SCHOOL



Seminole High School, coached by English teacher Kelly Meahl, finished eighth out of 43 teams from around the world in Division III (high schools). They came up with an amazing solution for a structure problem, nicknamed "Lose Your Marbles."

This problem required the team to design, build, and test a structure, made of balsa wood and glue, that would balance and support a heavy weight. The structure also had to hold five marbles and then release them one at a time as the weight increased. The team's solution also included a cast of zany characters.

"Our team put on a very creative skit with characters including Lady Gaga, the Mad Hatter, and Medusa," says Kelly.

Incredibly, Seminole High's structure, weighing only 18 grams, supported an unbelievable 995 pounds!

"I am very proud of these wonderful kiddos," says Kelly.

### MILLENNIUM MIDDLE SCHOOL



At the World Finals, the Millennium team chose to tackle a performance problem: create and perform a silent movie. The script for their movie revolved around an evil grocer who was replacing brand-name products with generics, causing the brand names to lodge a protest. The skit earned the team third place in the world and first in the United States in Division II (middle schools). Only teams from China and Poland scored higher in their category.

Millennium Middle School teacher Marissa Melin, who coaches the team with Jennifer MacDonald, was thrilled.

"We are really proud of our team," Marissa says. "This is the third year they've been together as a team. They took 13th place the first year, eighth the second, and third this year. They are the most creative and hardest working kids I have ever worked with."