

Publication: Schenectady Daily Gazette;Date: Jan 3, 2010;Section: Regional;Page: B3



RENSSELAER

Students reinvent universe

Work to hang at Proctors features new solar system

BY MICHAEL GOOT Gazette Reporter Reach Gazette reporter Michael Goot at 395-3105 or mgoot@dailygazette.net.

Picture that Earth has become a wasteland and humankind has to build a new life on a new planet.

That's the theme that Tech Valley High School students are using to design an art installation that will adorn the arcade of Proctors in downtown Schenectady soon.

Art instructor Ed Coolidge said Proctors officials wanted a space exploration-themed art piece to fit in with the showing of "Fly Me to the Moon," a 3-D animated film that simulates the 1969 Apollo 11 mission.

The 11th-grade students came up with a post-apocalyptic theme: "The earth is damaged and there is a new [solar] system created by man," Coolidge said.

The project includes planets with strange-looking trees circling a cube-shaped sun. The students have been working twice a week in art class since October on the project, which will be completed for installation later this month. The art piece is 8 feet tall by 8 feet wide by 8 feet long. It is going to hang diagonally about 10 to 12 feet off the floor at Proctors.

Students are busy designing, painting and working on electrical and more traditional components. On Tuesday, they were creating papier-mâché trees, planets and the sun.

"It's a project with a lot of variety, which I think kids really like," Coolidge said.

They were also working with seamstress Lynn Kopka to create a backdrop that will include large LED lights. Artist Jesse Stiles helped students develop the light concept and taught students how to use micro-controllers to make electronic animations.

James Hazzard, 16, of Sharon Springs, explained how the "suns" will be illuminated: "On the inside of this, there will be lights — red, yellow and orange LEDs — that change colors. It will emulate the new sun."

Rebecca Sturn, 16, of Rotterdam, plans to put LEDs in pingpong balls to create "stars." She's excited about the project.

"I like that it's really hands-on, and Proctors — where it's going — is five minutes from my house, which is really cool," she said.

Molly Ennist, 16, of Schoharie, said these kinds of projects make being a student at Tech Valley High enjoyable.

"I like that it's hands-on. It's stuff that makes sense. It's relative to the world," she said.

Principal Dan Liebert said the project fits right in with the school's theme.

"It's just a perfect combination of what Tech Valley High School is about — project-based learning, working together,

combining art and engineering, understanding what is Tech Valley, what's cool about our region.”



MICHAEL GOOT/FOR THE DAILY GAZETTE Students at Tech Valley High School work on the project envisioning a post-apocalypse universe, an art and technical project to hang in Proctors in Schenectady later this month. At left is Molly Ennist, 16, of Schoharie, with Alyssa Pettit, 16, of Duaneburg.