**Pelham Middle School Science Olympiad Team**

A team of Pelham Middle School students took home two team awards and six individual awards in the Westchester/Southern Rockland Regional Science Olympiad on Saturday.

The all-day event brought 28 teams from area middle schools to Scarsdale Middle School to compete in a series of science challenges that tested their knowledge and ingenuity in biology, earth science, chemistry, physics and technology. The events ranged from building a car that would levitate as it sped down a track to demonstrating in-depth knowledge of fossils and the solar system.

The Pelham Middle School's participation in Science Olympiad began last year, thanks to a grant from the Pelham Education Foundation, a not-for-profit group that uses donations from citizens, parents, students, alumni, businesses and foundations to enhance the quality of education in the Pelham schools.

The Pelham Education Foundation also made it possible for Pelham High School to start a Science Olympiad team last year; that team has been so successful that it is heading to the state-level competition March 18 and 19 in West Point.

In Saturday's regional event, the Pelham Middle School team came in 10th place.

"For a brand new team, we did really well," said Pelham Middle School Teacher Maria Buckley, the team's coach, noting that there are some schools that have been participating in Science Olympiad tournaments for many years.

Pelham also won the award for "Outstanding New Team."

The individual awards were 1st place in Ornithology (Max Pine and Daniel Weber); 2nd place in Solar System (Daniel Weber and Yuhui Tang); 4th place in Road Scholar (Max Pine and Nikolette Figueroa); 5th place in Dynamic Planet (Nikolette Figueroa and Daniel Weber) and 5th place in Fossils (Max Pine and Nikolette Figueroa).

Team members began preparing for the competition in November during after-school sessions with Mrs. Buckley. The students paired up to prepare for particular events, following detailed rules and restrictions.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of Science Olympiad, however, is that certain parameters of the events aren't revealed until the competition itself. For example, in an event in which the students had to build the furthest-shooting catapult according to specific parameters, they weren't told until the day of the event what object the catapult had to propel (a plastic golf ball).

Rachel Radvany, a 6th grade member of Pelham's team, participated in the "Car of Tomorrow" event, which required the students to build a car that would float as it moved down a magnetic track, which they did by using a battery-operated fan and polarized magnets.

"It was really fun and we learned a lot about magnetism and electricity," she said.

One of the strengths of the program is that it ties into the science curriculum and requires the students to be creative in applying the principles they have learned, said Mrs. Buckley.

"The event covered everything from 6th grade science through 8th grade science," she said. "It was a lot of work, but a lot of fun. We learned a lot and will be even better next year."

Pelham Middle School students competing in the competition were: sixth graders Jessica Engel, Erin Foxx, Ariel Karson, Megan Ploch, Rachel Radvany, Matt Rubbo, Albert Thomas and Alana Dvorkin; seventh grader Jake Soifer; eighth graders Nikolette Figueroa, Max Pine, Antonio Vigil, Daniel Weber, Sam Klein; ninth grader Yuhui Tang.