Meet the Winners

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In case you missed the ?Meet the Winners? breakfast during the Canada-Wide Science Fair, here is a summary of the interview with the three Platinum Award winners.

The Best Project Award and Senior Platinum Award went to Colette Benko, a grade 11 student from Calgary, Alberta. Her project identified a new use for an existing drug to effectively treat neuroblastoma-a deadly childhood cancer.

Besides science fair, what do you do in your spare time? I mostly do sports and I love rowing and cross country skiing.

What were some of the challenges you experienced while completing your project? I had lots of problems with cell lines. Sometimes I would have too many cells or too much drug, so it was really difficult to try to find the right balance. But, when I finally saw my first positive results, it was incredible!

Do you have any advice for students who are interested in starting a science fair project? My advice would be to start with something you?re really interested in, otherwise you won?t be as committed to your project. Like one of my first science projects investigated the best flour for baking cupcakes, even though it might not seem like the most important question, at the time, it was something I really wanted to know. So just start with the basics, start small and build your knowledge base, and really tackle what interests you.

What other interesting projects did you see at CWSF this year? I thought it was cool to see so many projects on the biology plants and to know that plant lives matter.

The Intermediate Platinum Award went to Crystal Radinski, a grade 10 student from Calgary, Alberta. Her project compared healthy brains to the brains of Alzheimer?s patients to find better diagnostic procedures using an existing technology (EEG).

Besides science fair, what do you do in your spare time? I am really into equestrian jumping and I also teach Spanish classes.

What were some of the challenges you faced in completing your project? Because of the long ethics process necessary for working with patients, it was difficult to handle the suspense and anticipation of getting results, as I had to wait for two months and lots of different stages of approval before I could even begin my project.

What have you learned from participating in the science fair? I think curiosity doesn?t have an age limit. No one can ever say that you can?t do something, and you have to believe in yourself and push past any negativity in order to achieve your own success.

What is your advice for students wanting to get involved in science fair? To know that there is a difference between loving a subject and being good at a subject. If you love something, you can push yourself to your limits and really try your best to understand that topic. I think younger students should try to push themselves to explore those subjects that they love and see what problems they can solve.

The Junior Platinum Award went to Danish Mahmood, a grade 8 student from London, Ontario. In his project, he developed a low-cost system to measure and communicate vital signs wirelessly, simplifying the process of monitoring patients.

Besides science fair, what do you do in your spare time? Well, doing science fair doesn?t leave you that much time at the end of the day but I do play a lot of soccer and I am involved with the student council at my school.

What were some of the challenges you faced in completing your project? Eight months ago I didn?t know anything about programming or engineering, so I had to entirely teach myself. I started with the big goal of the project and then broke it down into manageable tasks to focus on.

How do your classes at school help you in completing your project? I think schools could actually do a better job at encouraging others to innovate, and so creating maker spaces and innovation centres could allow students to further develop their inquiry skills and hopefully do science fair.

What is your advice for students wanting to get involved in science fair? Don?t start at the basic points, but start at your main goal and then break it down into the basic points that you can accomplish in order to solve your main problem.

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