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Students Fight off El Niño at Stanley Competition

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In spite of rain cloud headgear, Audrey Davis (left) and Kristi Conner have a sunny outlook for their Rube Goldberg project Photo Cathy Dausman

This year students coaxed dominoes to topple, ran toy cars and marbles down ramps and through chutes, and used pulleys, levers and zip lines to complete the seemingly endless task of opening an umbrella. Rain gear was abundant, and the presentations were imaginative. One group prefaced their turn with a skit involving a three-way conversation between a drought-challenged farmer, the weather forecaster and Mother Nature. Another literally turned the finale on its head by filling their umbrella with marbles and opening it upside down.

It was a young group this year, comprised largely of sixth-grade presenters, said science teacher and organizer Michael Meneghetti.

Meneghetti says Stanley is the only middle school in Northern California to offer the Rube Goldberg event, which is a scaled-back version of the Purdue University challenge originating in 1949. While the college-level challenge encourages entrants to use as many steps as possible, for size and time reasons the Stanley version was limited to a 12-step process. Overall layout dimensions were a maximum 130 by 75 by 100 centimeters (this is a science project, after all).

Meneghetti standardized just

one item in each project – the umbrella.

"We didn't want full sized umbrellas," he said, nor did he want anyone to opt for those tiny cocktail umbrellas, so each team used the same 10-inch paper umbrella.

Stanley students "put 40 to 50 hours into their 'babies,'" Meneghetti said. Still, the setups are fragile and he said that 80 to 90 percent of the machinery misfires the first time. That is why each team runs its invention twice. The groups were judged by a panel of four — a parent, a high school student, a school board member and Lafayette resident, each looking smart and official decked out in lab coats and carrying clipboards.

2016 Stanley Middle School Rube Goldberg awards: Outstanding Machine Awards:

- Group 5**
Paige Towery, Lucas Ross, Marco Stassi
- Group 7**
Kai De La Cruz, Ian McBride
- Group 10**
Eilidh Kilpatrick, Malena Vermut-Young
- Judges Choice:**
- Group 12**
Lauren Stadt, Lynn Wolfe, Sophia Browne

Best Heirlooms on Sale

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Chez Panisse, Cesar, Pizzaiolo, Penrose, The Grease Box and Kroner's Burgers. "Our produce are also sold in markets, like Star Grocery on Claremont Avenue in Berkeley and Diablo Foods in Lafayette," she adds.

Rajan says that the number of delivery points will not grow because the organization is and will remain small. "We deliver about 300 pounds of tomatoes, about 200 lbs. of summer squash, cu-

cumbers, eggplants and peppers, twice a week," he says. "Deliveries continue from late June through mid-October. The sale of fresh produce represents about two-thirds of our farm income. One-third is from plant sales."

The farm is located at 1290 Moraga Way, next to the fire station in downtown Moraga, on a property rented from the Bruzzone family. The non-profit group is 60-members strong.

They work on the farm every week and share the produce that isn't sold, while some goes to charity.

Every year the farmers grow their plants from seeds in their greenhouses and produce enough that about 3,000 small plants can be sold to the public between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday through April 24. Each 4-inch pot costs \$3.

Hillside and Ridgeline

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The council and consultant had difficulty finding quantifiable standards, such as a certain percentage of the hillside that could be fixed to protect the character of Moraga. The consultant said he would work on language to create a visual separation between new development and ridgelines.

The council members did agree with the recommendations by Noble and the steering committee to create a single consistent MOSO map incorporating property lines and existing developments; include the totality of Indian Ridge in the MOSO ridge line map; define the term "development" as displacement of material, grading, change in density, or construction of a structure; and design a new high-risk map using the latest information and technology.

Council members Onoda and Roger Wykle voiced concerns that removing the requirement for a hillside development permit could cre-

ate a loophole. They asked the consultant to check what would happen for developments on a slope greater than 20 percent, with more than 50 yards of soil removal.

Current text says that no development on MOSO land is allowed on slopes greater than 20 percent. It was decided that the area used to calculate the average slope includes the home and its landscaped area, called the building envelope, and that average slopes must be below 20 percent.

Some argued that if a developer remediates the high-risk nature of his land, then the density should be increased, noting that since remediation can be a benefit to the community and is very costly, some compensation should be included. The majority of the council disagreed, stating that when high-risk areas are fully remediated, the density allowed at that location should not change.

There was also a discussion to decide whether or not the term "dominating the landscape" should be added to a definition of a non-MOSO ridgeline. The consultant suggested he return with different maps according to different definitions, so the council could make a decision.

The last topic discussed had less to do with hillsides and ridgelines, and more to do with the size of homes built along the town's scenic corridors. The majority decision was to cap these highly visible home sizes in Moraga to 5,500 square feet, with a sliding scale for property between 20,000 square feet and 1 acre.

Drafting and agreeing on the revised texts should continue through the end of the year. There will be additional opportunities for public input during that time. For more information about the hillside and ridgeline project, visit www.moraga.ca.us/hillsides.