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EMPOWER SOLAR SENDING STUDENT WINNERS TO SOLAR DECATHLON EUROPE

Long Island teens placed first in solar competition, winning scholarships, trip to Versailles, France

ISLAND PARK, NY — As the winners of the 2014 EmPower Solar Student Competition, two students from Sayville High School will attend an all-expense-paid trip to Versailles, France, this summer to view the many solar-powered homes designed by college students from around the world at the Solar Decathlon Europe 2014.

EmPower Solar, an award-winning Long Island-based solar energy company, challenged New York high school students to participate in a multi-faceted competition that encompassed science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), and creative components. Thirty-six teams from 25 schools vied for a trip of a lifetime, but it was Liam Hofmeister and Sarah Walsh of team Apollo's Suns who placed first.

Upon hearing their names called and receiving congratulatory hugs from excited parents, the teens, filled with surprise and excitement, walked down the stairs of the Cradle of Aviation Dome Theater to collect their certificates. "Anyone could have gotten this, and I'm just thankful that we did," said Hofmeister, who learned of the competition from his mom when she was researching collegiate scholarship opportunities.

"My mom told me, 'Hey, this looks easy; just make a video,'" said Hofmeister, "and it quickly became a 40-hour project...There were a couple of late nights working on this, but it was totally worth it," said Hofmeister, son of Town of Islip Deputy Supervisor Eric Hofmeister.

The participating high school students from Nassau, Suffolk, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Manhattan were asked to evaluate the energy consumption and solar potential of a house or building in their community. They were also required to write a business letter to the building owner with the findings and produce a YouTube video on why the guest judges should pick them to join EmPower Solar in France.

"This was all entirely foreign to me, but it was really fun. I really enjoyed it," said Walsh, who likes to engage in the arts. "It was cool that I got to do something that I wouldn't have otherwise gotten to do."

EmPower Solar and host sponsor, the Cradle of Aviation Museum, presented certificates to the winning teams at Family Solar Night, an evening of interactive fun, learning, and celebration. Among the presenters was Greg D. Sachs, COO of EmPower Solar, who spoke of EmPower Solar's previous involvement at the U.S Solar Decathlon, as well Techstyle Haus teammates from Brown University, Isby Lubin and Sam Zeif, who are participating at Solar Decathlon Europe 2014.

Techstyle Haus, a collaboration between Brown University, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the University of Applied Sciences in Erfurt, Germany, opted to design and construct a Solar Decathlon home "like nothing you've ever seen before," said Zeif. They hope to win in the area of innovation with their solar powered passive house made of five structural steel ribs, high-performance textile layers, and insulation, rather than solid walls. "This was by far the best learning experience I've ever had," he added.

David G. Schieren, CEO of EmPower Solar, also presented and spoke of the need to store energy, dramatically expand solar, and build a smarter electric grid. He emphasized that renewable energy will lead to cleaner water and air and ultimately, a more healthy, prosperous, and civil world. Schieren challenged the students to join EmPower in this plan, Operation Solar Century, which will require collective engagement.

"A small group of people can have a very big impact," he said. "We can each have a transformative impact, and together we can very positively influence our society and the world." Helping to develop these leaders and renewable energy advocates, he said, is why EmPower Solar hosts the annual student competition.

Placing second in the competition was Team Green Track, hailing from Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day High School. This team was made up of international students who emphasized in their video how solar would benefit their countries of origin. "For me, what I really appreciated was working with a diverse team...We have different ideas, we're all from different countries. We compromised a lot and we just made it happen," said Baba Fousseni from Togo.

The second place team members each received a \$400 scholarship and the third place team members, The Green Generation from Wantagh High School, each received \$100. Both teams also have the opportunity to intern-for-a-day at EmPower Solar in a department of their choosing.

A number of educational organizations joined the competition as partners and guest judges, encouraging students to pursue studies and job opportunities in renewable energy.

"LIMSAT was proud to be a sponsor and to support the opportunity for students to deepen their knowledge, and develop their ideas about solar power and sustainability for the earth," said Harriet Copel. They are an impressive group of youngsters and we should be proud and hopeful for our future. EmPower gave a huge service for our community by providing this competition."

"With more than 100 students participating in the 2014 EmPower Solar Student Competition, it's clear that the future of solar energy on Long Island is shining brightly," added Hempstead Town Supervisor Kate Murray. "As we continue to advance our clean energy efforts at Hempstead Town, it's inspiring to see young men and women build their own environmental legacies. I commend our longtime green energy partner, EmPower Solar, led by CEO David Schieren, for working with local schools to cultivate the next generation of green energy leaders, and I congratulate the student competitors for their achievements."

EmPower Solar, as well as green-industry leaders, graded the projects. Guest judges included representatives from Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Cradle of Aviation, GLICC, LIMSAT, Operation SPLASH, Renewable Energy Long Island, Suffolk County Representative to Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, Sustainable Long Island, Sustainability Institute at Molloy, Town of Hempstead, and Vision Long Island.



Sarah Walsh and Liam Hofmeister of Team Apollo's Suns placed first in the EmPower Solar Student Competition hosted by CEO David G. Schieren, right, and COO Greg D. Sachs.



Team Green Track placed second in the EmPower Solar Student Competition. From left: COO Greg D. Sachs, Baba Foussemi, Elina Hadelia, Mame Cisse, Tashi Palden, Roy Malinis, and CEO David G. Schieren.



Partners and guest judges, who helped promote the student competition and grade final projects, were also in attendance at Family Solar Night. From left: Greg D. Sachs, COO of EmPower Solar; Catherine Bingham of the Cradle of Aviation; Tom Leddy of GLICCC; Kira Schultheiss of LIMSAT; Harriet Copel of LIMSAT; Tara Schneider of the Town of Hempstead; Leigh Block of Operation SPLASH; and David G. Schieren, CEO of EmPower Solar.

About EmPower Solar

EmPower Solar is a leading solar engineering and installation company serving residential and commercial markets in New York. Since 2003, EmPower has installed over 750 residential, commercial, and non-profit solar power systems in New York. The company was founded while working on a U.S. DOE Solar Decathlon project and continues to stay involved and encourage students in our region to pursue higher studies and careers in renewable energy.

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