Attleboro

Up, up - and away

BY MATT ROCHELEAU FOR THE SUN CHRONICLE Tuesday, July 22, 2008 2:49 AM EDT

Kevin Aguirre, 11, of Attleboro, launches his rocket during Wednesday's Sensata and United Way design contest to make and launch rockets. To view an online video of this event go to thesunchronicle.com/video. (Staff photo by Tom Maguire)

ATTLEBORO - Children and adults had a blast watching their creations soar overhead Wednesday at the Sensata Technologies and United Way sponsored rocket design and launching competition.

"It's awesome. Rockets are always fun," said Boy Scout and Cub Scout leader Barry Pond.

The water-powered rockets provided quite a show as the projectiles jetted past the 200-foot stretch of grass between Sensata's Operations and Business Centers, landing in the parking lot beyond.

Twenty different teams were composed of one child from either the Boys and Girls Club of Attleboro, Markman Children's Programs in Attleboro, the Attleboro YMCA or Anawan Council of Boy Scouts.

Traveling an estimated 392 feet, the winning rocket by Team 8 was constructed by 11-year-old Alex Girard of the Attleboro YMCA, along with Sensata employees Joe Medeiros and Roger Mayer of Rehoboth and Eric Morrison of Warwick, R.I. The group, which credited its success to good weight distribution and a "superior design," used a two-liter soda bottle for the base, a plastic folder for the nose and CDs broken in half for fins.

Design work Gary Hasson, Paula Hasson and Jay McGowan of Sensta put some big wings on the rocket of Amber James, 10, of Attleboro during Wednesday's Sensata and United Way design contest to make and launch rockets. To view an online video of this event, go to www.thesunchronicle.com/video.

"It's funny to see all the different designs," said Pond, who helped his 10-year-old son, Matt, build "The Phoenix" for Team 14, which cleared the bushes just before the parking lot.

Each team had only an hour and a list of specified materials to build the rockets in the Business Center auditorium. Teams were given the opportunity to make modifications after their first try.

Team 13 used the CDs, bolts and washers they were provided to give their design the weight they wanted.

"The whole thing was Freddy's idea," said DiBenedetto, who worked with 10-year-old Freddy Moran of Markman's Children's Programs in Attleboro and fellow interns Bryan Methe of Longmeadow and Michael Chin of Foxboro.

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Moran performed a victory dance after a successful blast for his team. He said he was excited and the best part of the day was getting to pull the launch cord, "and have it not blow up on the launch pad," added teammate and Sensata intern John DiBenedetto of Raynham.

The design contest was used, "to increase employee awareness of United Way funded agencies," Sensata spokeswoman Linda Megathlin said.

And it seemed to work as, a crowd of employees surrounded the launch site while others lined office building windows and the pavement to catch a glimpse.

Cheers, 'ohs' and 'ahs' echoed through the quad during the two rounds of lift-offs.

For first place, Girard received his own prize pack, a donation of $127 for the Attleboro YMCA and the promise of rocket-shaped ice pops for his entire camp at a later date. Sensata was awarded the United Way's Chairman's Cup, becoming the only company to win the honor twice since it was introduced in 2002.

TOM MAGUIRESensata wins cup Peter Thomas, left, the chief professional officer and senior vice president of United Way of Massachusetts presents the United Way of Massachusetts Bay Chairman's Cup to David Britton, the co-chairman of the Sensata United Way Campaign on Wednesday. Sensata was awarded the United Way's Chairman's Cup, becoming the only company to win the honor twice since it was introduced in 2002. Sensata won the cup last year, which is given to a company that gives back the most to communities in New England. VIDEO: To view an online video of the rocket design and launch competition, go to thesunchronicle.com/video.

Sensata won the cup last year, which is given to a company that gives back the most to communities in New England, said Peter Thomas, senior vice president of the United Way of Massachusetts.

"Today is an excellent example of how you folks give back to the community," Thomas said, handing the prize to David Britton, Sensata's engineering manager in sensors and co-chairman of its United Way group.

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