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Students race to slow use of energy

About 80 youths learn about energy conservation through model cars.

By JORGE BARRIENTOS

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If they were old enough to drive, they probably would be saving a lot on gas.

About 80 fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders at Northwood Elementary on Friday raced their creations of small, wooden cars powered by electricity, propellers, solar panels and rubber bands.

The children are taking part in PEAK Energy Adventure, a two-week class offered as part of the Irvine Public Schools Foundation summer school program in which students learn about energy conservation.

Some motorized cars were decorated with camouflage and American flags, and some sported wings. They twirled in circles, crashed into walls and some just couldn't get started.

Teachers gave prizes for the fastest car, "most relaxed" or slowest car, most acrobatic, best designed and most artistic.

"It's really fun because we get to build cars, and we learn about saving energy," said Emilie Gao, 9, who won first place for fastest electric car.

Students learned from the class to save energy by turning off lights when not in use, washing dishes and clothes at night or in the morning and by playing outside instead of playing video games inside, among other things.

"I'm learning about different types of renewable energy," said Janice Chun, 12. "I know it'll help the environment, and it won't pollute as much, and it'll save a lot of money."

The PEAK program partners with The Energy Coalition and is working with The Southern California Gas Co. and Southern California Edison. Both two-week summer programs cost \$6,000. The next PEAK program, which is in its fifth year, will begin Monday at Northwood Elementary.



Ready to get the race rolling: Janice Chun, 12, of Irvine, left, prepares to release her solar car at the beginning of the race finals during the PEAK Student Energy Actions program Friday at Northwood Elementary School. Chun, who won the race for fastest solar car, said she has learned about different types of renewable energy during the two-week program.

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