

## **Young minds think big - Inventor Conference Held At Holy Trinity**

A group of nine- and 10-year-old Catholic school student inventors proved that children really can be seen and heard during an inventors conference Saturday at Holy Trinity Catholic High School.

"We should talk to young people and encourage them to have ideas," said inventor Keith Black. "Inventing is a vehicle for enthusiasm and they may find their meaning or where they are going in the future."

The conference, where amateur inventors pitched their ideas to around 20 industry manufacturers, marketers and distributors, was the big finale to a five-day workshop put on by the Inventors College Organization in Brantford.

The purpose of the workshop is to promote creativity through inventing and make the inventing process a real option for creative minds.

Thirty children, including eight Norfolk County students, learned about brainstorming techniques, searching for patents and how to apply for patents. They also learned how to present their ideas to industry reps.

"Without the industry guys, the whole workshop is just an exercise," said Otto Schmidt, who came up with the idea of the workshops with the help of inventor Jim Szabo. "We encourage them to come out and seriously consider some of these ideas."

Which is exactly what they did. Industry representatives circled the room speaking with every young inventor.

"There are several ideas that I'm interested in," said Tom Gaasenbeck, president of Memex Electronics out of Burlington. "There are a few that I could use all or part of their invention."

While it is yet to be seen whether the next big thing will come from the mind of a 10-year-old Norfolk student, the kids deemed the day a success.

"It made me realize that you can do anything if you just try," said inventor Andrew Vallee from St. Joseph's in Simcoe. "I like talking to (business representatives) and seeing where they would change things and make it better."

He said their interest gave him "courage and hope" for the future.

Kim Gubbels, a student at St. Frances Cabrini in Delhi, was very excited about the whole workshop.

"I will be more creative than I was before," she said. "It was so much fun and different from school."

While a disclosure contract limits the Reformer from reporting what inventions were presented, there was a wide variety that ranged from modified sports equipment to inventions that could improve the health and safety industry or gadgets to help around the house.

"Good ideas can come from anywhere and young people look at things differently," Gaasenbeck said. "Where we take things for granted, they look at it with fresh eyes."

He added that many of the inventions were what kids would actually want to use.

"What that is saying to me is that adults can't be innovative in a kid's world," he said.

Besides the calibre of inventions, Gaasenbeck was also impressed with the level of professionalism coming from the young inventors.

"The fact they had their little business plans and business cards and had done patent and market searches showed they were very professional," Gaasenbeck said.

The kids were also taped for an upcoming TVO show called Think Big, which will air in the fall.0