

The Ranatra Fusca Award

By Adam Bahr, senior

On April 10, St. John Neumann Regional Academy's Odyssey of the Mind teams participated in the state tournament. Three of our four teams advanced to World Finals by winning first place in their problem and division.

Our team, "Return to the Gift of Flight", is one of the first place teams that are advancing to World Finals. We also won a Ranatra Fusca, the most coveted award in Odyssey of the Mind.

The concept for the Ranatra Fusca award came about in the early days of the program, in the 1980s, when a team devised an extremely creative solution to a problem.

They based their water craft solution on the insect named "Ranatra Fusca", which can walk on water.

Although the team did not successfully solve the problem, Odyssey of the Mind creator, Samuel Micklus, believed that the team should receive an award for their very creative solution, hence, the Ranatra Fusca Award.

The Ranatra Fusca award is very difficult to win. Judges nominate a team they feel is worthy, and the nomination then goes to a board of officials who make the final determination.

Any team that wins the Ranatra Fusca automatically advances to the next level of competition, regardless of their finishing position in the competition. The Ranatra rewards creative risk-taking in solving the problem.

The "Return to the Gift of Flight" problem required us to create aircraft to complete six different flight plans.

The flight plans were: fly straight, fly slow, touch down and take off, make a target spin, mass launch of multiple aircraft and drop something into a target. We spent a lot of time designing and building the aircraft, and sometimes rebuilding them after a crash.

Our performance had to include an air traffic controller that described the flight plans during the performance. The character does not have to act like an air traffic controller. In fact, we used Billy Mays (portrayed by team member Phillip Trometter) as our air traffic controller.

The judges nominated our team for a Ranatra Fusca because of the creative engineering and technical aspects of our aircraft, the improvisational techniques used by our air traffic controller character, and the overall creativity of the performance. Our team feels deeply honored to receive the Ranatra Fusca Award and, for me, it is a very fitting way to end my Odyssey of the Mind career.

As I journey to college in the fall, I will take the lessons that I have learned over the past nine years of participation in this program and funnel it to my studies in engineering.

I thank my teammates and coaches for their dedicated commitment to our team, and the administration of our school for their continued support of the Odyssey of the Mind program.



A closer look inside our schools from the students' perspective

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This page was created by students at St. John Neumann Regional Academy

A Tournament to Remember

By Phillip Trometter, Senior

This year's Pennsylvania Odyssey of the Mind Tournament on April 10 at Williamsport Area High School was one to remember.

Over 150 teams from across the state competed in various problem-solving competitions.

As a senior Omer competing for St. John Neumann, this year was a different experience than years past.

As I walked around the competition site and saw all the kids and teenagers competing for the first and second place spot to go to World Finals at Michigan State University, it was a bitter-sweet feeling.

I thought about all the times I went to States with my team, and all the memories and friendships I built through OM.

Though it could have been the last time that my team performed, thankfully it was not. My team took first place in "Return to the Gift of Flight" and we made it to World Finals, as well as our Academy's two Division I teams, "Food Court" and "Nature Trail'R".

In addition, and still much to my amazement, we won the coveted "Ranatra Fusca" award — probably the most desirable and prized award in Odyssey of the Mind.

Immediately after getting first place and the Ranatra Fusca, I stepped back and thought about something else: our two Division I teams earning first place.

This was a symbolic victory because I will be going to Worlds for the last time, yet they will be going for the first time.



PHOTO PROVIDED

The St. John Neumann Regional Academy Division III Return to the Gift of Flight team is shown above. Front row, from left, are Odyssey of the Mind coaches Jeff Trometter and Keith Bauer; center row, JoAnne Murphy and Katie Bahr; and back row, Doug Hasko, John Mattiace, Adam Bahr, Phillip Trometter, Lakeisha James and Coach Kathy Bahr.

When I looked at their faces and the excitement I saw in their families, I fondly reminisced about the first time I went to World Finals, and in a way, I saw myself in their place—getting the gold for the first time!

As I looked around the tournament site at all the supporters and teams, at my medal, and the thought of my team's name engraved on the Ranatra Fusca, I couldn't help but think that I will miss it all when World Finals is over.

I feel an extreme sense of accomplishment for my team and my school.

As a team, we worked over six months to get to state fi-

nals and hopefully make it to Worlds.

We logged in countless hours building aircraft and props, practicing spontaneous problem-solving and rehearsing our skit. In the end, it all paid off.

Without a doubt, Odyssey of the Mind is, and forever will be, an integral part of my life. I learned too much to put in writing here, but the lessons will help me throughout my life.

I have forged lasting relationships with people from around the world and within my own team who have taught me what it really means to "think outside the box."

Moreover, since seventh grade, I am proud to call my coaches and my teammates true friends who have helped shape who I am today.

I have been proud to represent St. John Neumann Regional Academy at the Regional, State and World Finals with the kind of coaches and teammates that, quite frankly, I believe no other school in the world has.

Without a doubt this year's state finals was one to remember, and I look forward to representing our school in my last (but certainly not St. John Neumann's) Odyssey of the Mind World Finals Tournament on May 26 to 29 at Michigan State University.

Our Exciting Odyssey

By Amanda Southard, 5th grade

Being a member of an Odyssey of the Mind team is one of my favorite things to do. It is nice to be with my friends, and my parents and sister, who are the coaches.

I have a great time with my team coming up with creative solutions and then acting them out in a skit. I also enjoy competing against other teams and watching the teams to see how they solved the problem.

This year, our team chose to solve the "Food Court" problem. We began meeting in October and easily worked over 150 hours. We had to choose an unhealthy food item and put it on trial. We chose a chocolate chip cookie to accuse skim milk of being unhealthy. Rather than a traditional courtroom, our skit took place in a human stomach.

Everyone brought their own special talent to our team. Christine McFadden (aka "The Jelly") did an amazing job with costume and prop creations. She also made us laugh throughout the entire season.

Marilyn Hiller (aka "The Peanut Butter") had a great stage presence and always did whatever needed to be done, no questions asked.

Shayna McNamee (aka



PHOTO PROVIDED

Front row, from left, are members of the Food Court team: Ryenn Yearick, Amanda Southard, Marilyn Hiller, Christine McFadden and Shayna McNamee; and back row, Jessica Mattiace and Emily Walter. Not pictured are Coaches Bret Southard, Denise Southard and Amy Southard.

"The Hostess Twinkie" always had the most outrageous and hysterical spontaneous answers. Shayna had a leading role for the first time and she was a star!

Ryenn Yearick (aka "Butter Stick") wrote most of the script for our skit. This is her first time as an Omer and when she first started, she was very shy. She and Emily Walter, another first-timer (aka "Butter Stick") really helped us out especially when, at the last minute, we decided to add a poem to our skit.

Jessica Mattiace (aka "The Cookie") was very

convincing in her role and we can always count on her for a creative play on words.

I played the Skim Milk character and enjoyed playing the keyboard during our skit.

Sammy Micklus, son of the creator of Odyssey of the Mind, and author of the "Food Court" problem, stopped by to see our performance at the state competition, and he took the time to compliment us on our solution of the problem.

I am very excited for World Finals, and I know that we will make our school and state proud!



PHOTO PROVIDED

From left are members of the Nature Trail'R Division I team: David Montis, Natalie Kolczynski, Adriana Barone, Bridget Foresman, Kendra Snyder, Bianca Lilley and Adali Matz.

My Odyssey of the Mind experience

By Natalie D. Kolczynski, 5th grade

My Odyssey of the Mind team earned first place, competing in Division I, "Nature Trail'R", at the State Tournament on April 10, and we will be going to World Finals in Michigan next month.

My team really wanted to win because we didn't make it beyond the state competition last year. All of us were very disappointed when we didn't achieve our goal.

When we began Odyssey of Mind practices again this school year, our team worked a lot harder than we did last year. Teammates are everything in Odyssey of the Mind. It is all about learning to work together.

Everyone put in a marvelous effort to get along with each other. And all the work paid off, as we placed first in the state competition. The world competition lasts for three days, followed by an awards ceremony. Meeting kids from other states and countries will

be neat. I look forward to seeing other teams perform from across the country and around the world.

Imagine coming all the way across the world to Michigan to represent your country and your school.

I want to thank Williamsport Area High School for hosting the state tournament, all of the Odyssey of the Mind judges, and everyone who makes Odyssey of the Mind possible.

My extra special thanks go to the two most incredible coaches ever, Mrs. Kathy Bahr and Mr. Keith Bauer, for preparing us for the competitions. St. John Neumann Regional Academy and my teachers support our efforts, especially my homeroom teacher, Sr. Agnes Panik. She helped me understand rules and the value of hard work.

My teammates and I believe we will be ready next month for the Odyssey of the Mind World Competition. We plan to do our best and have a lot of fun in Michigan!