

Rrooar Academy Programs Taking Students to New Levels of Excellence

Coding Students Participate in Rrooar’s Game Design Competition

During the first weekend of March, Rrooar Coding and Robotics Academy held their third yearly Game Design Competition. 40 students in grades 1 through 12 gathered virtually from across the country to present their original computer games to a panel of tech industry professionals. Competing students were broken off into groups by grade, with Group 1 being of grades 1 through 4, and Group 2 being from grades 5 through 8. There was a third group of a smaller number of non-competing high school students, who were considered for event-wide special awards.

The topic of the competition and each participants’ game was “End Game,” in the spirit of keeping one’s focus ahead toward their dreams for the future. During the event, participants shared a video presentation first describing their game and its coded mechanisms, followed by a demonstration



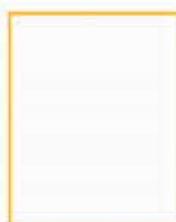
of the game being played. They were then questioned by each of the three judges on specific elements of their game.

The judges for the event were Chris Rosana, a former coding mentor at Rrooar who is now a security analyst at Verana Health, Taranjit Singh, the Head of Data Science and Analytics at Harbor Freight Tools, and Tim Fox, a game designer at Activision and creator of Aura Online. Each game was judged by its mechanics, such as how the characters functioned in the game, the losing and winning mechanisms, as well as the underlying code organization; gameplay, like the interaction of the games’ characters with its sound and graphics; and, overall presentation and communication of the games’ primary themes.

Sam Pasto, a third grade student from Questa Elementary in Mountain House,

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Rrooar’s Game Design Competition Winners

					
Sam Pasto 1 st Place Group 1 Questa Elementary Mountain House CA	Viha Balaji 2 nd Place Group 1 Peter Hansen Elementary Mountain House CA	Maaya Karthik 3 rd Place Group 1 Bethany Elementary Mountain House CA	David Cisneros 1 st Place Group 2 Peter Hansen Elementary Mountain House CA	Anshita Thora 2 nd Place Group 2 Hollifield Station Ellicott City MD	Mairn Alam 3 rd Place Group 2 Wicklund Elementary Mountain House CA
					
David DeSilva Special Award Rroaring Ahead Into The Future Blue Ridge Academy Mountain House CA	Ankita Narayan Special Award Original Gamedemaker Peter Hansen Elementary Mountain House CA	Harini TikkiSetti Special Award Creative Gamedemaker Hollifield Station Ellicott City MD	Tyla Jordan Special Award Innovative Gamedemaker Venture Academy Tracy CA		

Rrooar Academy Hosts Third Annual Speech Competition

This past month, Rrooar Coding and Robotics Academy hosted their third annual Original Oratory competition. The event, emceed by New Jersey educator Chris Wiseman, saw more than 100 students from across the country participate in the competition centered around the topic “Divided We Fall.”

The speakers were split into Group 1, grades 1 through 4, and Group 2, grades 5 through 8. They competed in qualifying rounds before proceeding to the national event the following weekend.

Rrooar Founder and CEO, Gagan A. Kaur, says she sees her company as “a pioneer in the path of providing a national platform for elementary school students.” She emphasized the importance of teaching public speaking at a young age by saying “this is where the seeds of the future are sown.”

Participants were tasked with writing and performing an original speech regarding the topic on Zoom. Various accomplished professionals across the Bay Area and Central Valley made up the judges panel, including: Stephanie Olson, an EEO discrimination attorney and Trustee of Lammersville School District; Shaki Pothini, an engineering leader at Bio-Rad Labs; Sharan Kaur, a former Trustee of New Haven School District and entrepreneur; Paul Romero, a licensed school psychologist; Amanda Chagoya, a lifetime public speaker and marketing professional; Megan Wingo, Fresno County Public Defender; and Christa Cannon, a professional actress and singer.

The judges expressed admiration for the participants’ speeches and the wide range of topics the children discussed. Judge Romero stated that in accordance with the idea of “Divided We Fall,” each

participant “is united in bringing forth information and experiences to the public.” He elaborated with “This is why we create poems, writings and speeches: to share this information with the world.”

After some difficult decisions, Medha Koudinya, a third grader from Forest Park Elementary, was declared the winner of Group 1, and Shriyadita Poduval, a fifth grader from Kolb Elementary, won

first place for Group 2.

Medha’s speech began with a metaphor relating sports like tug-of-war and cricket to the importance of teamwork and cooperation when tackling environmental pollution. She stated that “If all we think about is our own needs and comforts, then it’s only a matter of time until life on Earth falls apart.” Later, she impressively subverted her own

opening by explaining that “reality is not as simple as tug-of-war... we must act now and act together to save our only home.”

Shiryadita offered a nuanced discussion on having different opinions from one another versus being “divided.” She observed that in our country’s struggle to confront issues such as gun violence, COVID-19, and homelessness, we may often

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Rrooar’s Original Oratory Championship Winners

						
Medha Koudinya 1 st Place Group 1 Special Award Budding Orator Forest Park Elementary Fremont CA	Vihaan Ailiani 2 nd Place Group 1 Special Award Thought Leader Warm Springs Fremont CA	Ikhsha Kalwal 3 rd Place Group 1 Forest Park Elementary Fremont CA	Shriyadita Poduval 1 st Place Group 2 Kolb Elementary Dublin CA	Diya Dileep 2 nd Place Group 2 Special Award Motivational Speaker Peter Hansen Elementary Mountain House CA	Ronit Parikh 3 rd Place Group 2 Forest Park Elementary Fremont CA	Aarnav Shah Special Award - Rroaring Ahead Into The Future Peter Hansen Elementary Mountain House CA

Winners from Qualifying Rounds

						
Trisha Thyagarajan Hopkins Junior High Fremont CA	Jessica Chen Forest Park Elementary Fremont CA					
						
Anita Yang Forest Park Elementary Fremont CA	Kriti Jethwani Hollifield Station Ellicott City MD	Ishana Padmanabhan Forest Park Elementary Fremont CA	Ariyaa Perez Challenger Newark CA	Tamaira Batra Delaine Eastin Elementary Union City CA	Tanya Shah Forest Park Elementary Fremont CA	Saanvi Ingole Forest Park Elementary Fremont CA

Rrooar Game Design

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won first place for Group 1. Sam designed a platform game called “Crystal Cats,” in which the player helps the titular cat collect crystals and keys to escape a labyrinth of sorts. Judges were very impressed with the visual style, sense of story, and personality of the game. Sam’s father is a software engineer who has worked on several popular video games, and Sam is very much interested in following in his father’s footsteps. They share weekly coding lessons together, as well as frequent “Family Art Time,” and “Family Story Time,” during which Sam is encouraged to express his creativity through diverse mediums.

In second place for Group 1 was Viba Balaji, a Mountain House student from Peter Hansen Elementary. Viba’s game was entitled “The Mermaid Game,” and required the player to dodge nefarious sea creatures while collecting valuable pieces of treasure. Third place for group 1 was Maaya Karthik from Bethany Elementary, who created “Make a Fruit Salad.” In this game, “good” and “bad” foods dropped down from the top of the screen into the player’s bowl.

The first place winner of Group 2 was Davio Cisneros, a fifth grader also attending Peter Hansen Elementary. Davio envisioned and designed “Space Expedition,” in which the player navigates their spaceship through layers of asteroids coming towards them while they search for a valuable relic. The judges commended Davio’s use of random sequencing regarding the game’s obstacles, the smoothness of movement, and communication between different game mechanics (i.e. the health bar decreasing when an obstacle is hit). Davio wants to be an architect when he grows up, but dreads the amount of math this will require. Coding and game design is a relatively recent venture for him, but he sees this as a fun way to learn useful skills for his future career.

The runner-ups for Group 2 included Anwita Thora, who attended the Zoom competition from Maryland, and Maira Alam from Wicklund Elementary. Anwita’s game was called “Catch the Golden Acorn,” and judges especially praised her use of various game formats within her single design. One level involved dodging obstacles, and the next included navigating a maze. This displayed her depth of knowledge of coding, as well as adaptability in working with different designs.

Judges also presented special awards that ignored age group classifications. The “Creative Gamemaker” was named Harini Tikisetti, the “Innovative Gamemaker” was Tyla Jordan, and the “Original Gamemaker” was Ankita Narayan. Rrooar’s own “Rroaring Ahead Into The Future” award was presented to David DeSilva.

Rrooar’s competition was open to students from its game design courses, and participants worked hard with coding experts for several months in preparation for the event. This year’s number of participants nearly tripled from 2021’s competition, and the company is encouraged by the growing interest it is seeing.

So far, 2022 has been a busy year for the after-school Academy; in addition to the Game Design competition, it published the first edition of a new bilingual picture book series, hosted its Original Oratory competition, and organized a theatrical production of Disney’s *Lion King, Jr.*

Rrooar Speech Comp

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“stick to our egos and blind beliefs,” which halts discussion and prevents progress. She added that having different opinions on these problems is “an opportunity to learn from each other,” but this is not what she sees happening in our political landscape.

In addition to the overall winners, selected students received special awards. Diya Dileep was recognized as the event’s “Motivational Speaker,” Vihaan Ailiani as the “Thought Leader,” Group 1 winner Medha Koudinya as the “Budding Orator,” and Arnav Shah won the company’s “Rroaring Ahead Into the Future” award.

Participants had spent months preparing for the competition through Rrooar’s coaching sessions, hosted by entrepreneur and theater activist Ish Amitoj Kaur. In these classes, students learned how to incorporate the open-ended “Divided We Fall” into topics they were passionate about.

This guidance seemed to have a profound effect on the diversity of ideas covered during the competition. As a result of creative freedom and encouragement throughout the speech-writing process, the children appeared confident and comfortable with what they’d written. Attendees heard speeches on issues ranging from cyberbullying, environmentalism, and foreign policy, to things like gymnastics, dance, and family dynamics.

As the third original oratory competition, the company saw an increase in scale from last year’s contest. In addition to nearly doubling the number of students, this year’s event was opened up to a national level, as kids from Texas to Chicago and the East Coast had the chance to enroll in coaching sessions and compete in the qualifying rounds. National Original Oratory Champion, JJ Kapur, and U.S. Representative, Josh Harder, were special guests for the final round, with messages for the students on the oneness of humanity to start off the event with an inspiring note.

Rrooar Academy hopes to continue the pattern of growth they have seen over the last few years, expanding both their student base and curriculum. Looking ahead, coach Ish has been motivated by Supreme Court Justice-elect Ketanji Brown Jackson’s attribution of her success to childhood public speaking courses. She hopes to use Jackson’s example to encourage her students not only to continue their journey in public speaking, but to take the skills they learn into other personal and professional aspects of their lives.

Your Brain Needs a Detox Too... and Here are Some Great Ways to Do it

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physical health in a BIG way, and it isn’t positive! Just like when you do a detox diet to flush out toxins from your body and cleanse your internal organs, it’s also helpful to flush out toxins from the mind. What do I mean by toxins here? I don’t mean the toxins in the air we breathe or in the food we eat here (though they are definitely harmful). I am talking about mental and emotional toxins that often go unnoticed, but are important to clean out. For years you have probably bombarded your brain with all kinds of things, such as social media, other people’s problems, recurrent thoughts of your life events, and bottled up pain and frustration. But, you don’t want these thoughts. They are going to have a negative impact on you, making it harder to focus, leading to fatigue, and an overall glum and unhappy mood. However, don’t you worry! Here is a list of powerful laxatives that you can do to start a mental detox, and begin refocusing for good.

Meditate. We’ve all heard about the power of meditation. It’s been shown to ease depression, improve mental function, and reduce stress and anxiety. Meditation quiets the constant, undirected thinking that often brings anxiety, worry, and distraction into our everyday lives. Meditation can lead you to become more mindful and clear-headed, gaining a greater understanding of life and purpose. This simple charm resets your mind so you can move through the triggers, feelings and thoughts and get onto a more productive and healthy action like cooking dinner or getting organized for the next day.

Take deep breaths. Deep breathing is a practically effortless way to calm your mind. Find a quiet space and close your eyes. Breathe in for a count of four, hold that breath for four counts, breathe out for four, hold for four again – and repeat. Using this strategy for as little as 10 minutes a day can help you see a difference.

Spend time outdoors. With all the chaos of everyday life, there’s nothing like taking a walk through nature. Research shows that going out for a while can invite encouragement, inspiration, and increased energy levels to, not only our mind, but also to our body. The coronavirus pandemic doesn’t have to halt all of our outdoor fun. There are many low risk, socially-distanced outdoor activities you can still do. Walking, jogging, hiking, roller skating, kayaking, boating, you name it! You can also hold virtual fitness classes with your friends and family.

Journal or vent. Sometimes, you just need to get things out of your mind, and a perfect way to do that is by journaling or vent to a friend or family member. If you choose to journal, write down things that have been bothering you, who have really been getting under your skin (mostly my little brother for me :D), and details that are irritating you, even if they are as small as that one pencil that never sharpens to a fine tip!

Stop comparing yourself to others. In today’s world it is literally impossible to not compare yourself to others around you. In a single day, most people hear their peers degrade their appearance or intelligence more times than they can count. I can’t even list how many times I’ve heard people say “Oh my god, I look so ugly” or “Ugh, I’m so fat and gross”. You need to know that constantly looking at a super-edited version of the world doesn’t do your mental health any good. You’re going to feel a lot more full because of it.

Sources

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Timbuktu, It Exists, It’s Real!

By Wyatt Gray, 8th Grade Student, Mountain House

Timbuktu, the capital city of Mali, was established as the learning center by the King, Mansa Musa. A devout Muslim, Mansa Musa, ruled over Mali from 1312CE (Common Era) to 1337CE. Under Musa’s rule, Mali became the most powerful Islamic kingdom in 14th-century Africa. In 1324, Mansa Musa made a religious pilgrimage, traveling from West Africa to the holy city of Mecca. During Musa’s journey, he stopped in multiple cities.

It is said that Musa spent and gave away so much gold that the value of gold decreased in Egypt and Arabia. One shop owner who saw Musa in his city commented, “The generosity from this leader (Mansa Musa) is unimaginable.”

*Note from coach Gagan Kaur - “Remembering this great, generous Muslim king during the holy month of Ramadan.”

Mountain House Branch Library is Now Open 7 Days/Week!

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10-8	10-7	1-6	10-6	10-5	10-5	12-5



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