

Young scientists' creativity shines through at school fair

By Kathryn Reed

ZEPHYR COVE – Buy the cheap hamburger. The lean stuff produces about as much grease as the fatty kind.

That's what Aubrey Felton discovered in his science experiment. The Zephyr Cove Elementary School sixth-grader took first place Tuesday night for his grade level.



Aubrey Felton's hamburger experiment was a winner. Photos/Kathryn Reed

He used raw and frozen meat of different grades to see which produced the most grease and if the cost difference was worth it.

Felton concluded, "I would buy the cheapest because all the different kinds of meats contain about the same amount of grease."

The annual science fair is geared toward fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders, though some in the lower grades entered the

contest. Samantha Fonvilly and Gigi Stetler took top honors for fifth-graders for their “Bacteria Among Us” project. Jonathan Duffy won at the fourth-grade level for his “Yeast” experiment.

The top four finishers in grades four to six go on to the next level of competition in Reno on March 26-27.

Judges were three Lake Tahoe Community College instructors and a parent. Millie Oleson, who



Carbon dioxide and yeast was one experiment.

teaches chemistry at LTCC and is a parent of a ZCES student, organized and helped judge the event.

“There were some really good original ideas. There are some really bright minds out there,” Oleson said. “They learned how to scientifically test something.”

Jordyn and Hannah Switzer, sixth-graders, created a mini solar vehicle.

“We would put another motor in the back next time,” Jordyn Switzer said. They tried it with both motors in back, but found with the two motors they had that one in front and one in back gave it the most power.

Solar panels on the wood body of the vehicle powered the engines. Alligator clips and Christmas lights are some of the

tools they used to rig their hot rod. Next time they may need to add four-wheel drive because as Switzer said, "It doesn't work on gravel."

Kristen Oleson, a third-grader, spent her time indoors trying to find out what happens when you don't follow a recipe. She made several cakes. One was missing the water, another had extra oil and one had five egg whites instead of three.



Kristen Oleson explains what to do and not do with a cake recipe.

Oleson said they all tasted good except for the one with the extra oil. Even though the waterless one was hard and crumbly, she said it had great flavor.

The experiments covered the spectrum of scientific intrigue. One student examined which types of oranges produce the most juice. The effectiveness of magnets at different temperatures was researched. A team studied what plays the biggest role in the speed of a skier or snowboarder. The conclusion was weight helped and pink wax is a bad thing.