

# Students, industry cook up fresh ideas

By DWAYNE BUTLER  
Daily News Staff

KEWASKUM — Students from Kewaskum High School put on their thinking caps and designed a grill that is more than the standard model a homeowner would have on a patio or deck.

They created a custom-made model as part of Project GRILL (Growing Readiness for Learning and Leading), a program through the Fond du Lac Area Association of Commerce which challenges students and their manufacturing partners to design, test and build a working charcoal grill from scratch.

The project was designed to generate student interest in manufacturing.

Project GRILL was initiated in nearby Sheboygan County in the 2007-08 school year, where students in technical education classes received practical experience in design and building concepts, communications and leadership while learning from industry workers in the "real world" about potential manufacturing careers.

Students used a curriculum that was designed by teachers and professionals from the manufacturing industry to complete the project.

Kewaskum, the lone participant from Washington County, competed against five other high school technical education classes: Campbellsport, Fond du Lac, Laconia, Oakfield and Horace Mann.

Each school was partnered with an area manufacturing company to design and con-



Submitted photo

On hand for the unveiling of a custom-made grill as part of Project GRILL last month were the following technical education teachers and students from Kewaskum High School: Patrick Moerchen, Ryan Reibe, Tasha Wagner, Eric Sabel, Kevin Hein, Kolin Knoblauch, Josh Harbin, Chris Wetzels, Jason Geidel and Bryan Puls. They were joined by Kelly Flood and Dan Haave of J.F. Ahern Co.

struct a working grill from scratch. Kewaskum paired with J.F. Ahern Company, Fond du Lac. The company used employees from a number of departments to work with students on the project, and gave them insight to the sponsored company and potential careers in manufacturing.

The teams unveiled their grills during a public ceremony at Moraine Park Technical College in Fond du Lac last month.

Kewaskum built a three-piece grill out of steel, featuring a CO2 charged beverage dispenser, a rotisserie grill with an electric motor, cutting board and condiment dispenser and a stereo sound system and storage.

Their only criteria during the unveiling was to cook a

dozen brats in one hour.

Each of the six manufacturers donated \$5,000 to the chamber, of which \$2,500 was earmarked to each school as a budget to purchase supplies, build and test the grill. The schools were responsible for submitting an expense report to the chamber for reimbursement.

Kewaskum's completed grill made it under budget by \$20.

"I think the students had the idea that the grill fabrication would be the most difficult portion, but they quickly learned that communicating with their teammates, reading blueprints, changing designs, purchasing materials, managing budgets and working as a coherent group was the greatest challenge," said Patrick

Moerchen, CAD/CAM, manufacturing, technology and engineering education instructor at KHS. "But it also provided them with the most insight toward any of their chosen career interest."

Students met monthly with representatives of J.F. Ahern, either in Fond du Lac or in Kewaskum, and made visual presentations on the project's progress.

"The students were very energetic," said Dan Haave, director of human resources for J.F. Ahern. "There was a creative and talented group there."

Senior Josh Harbin said he joined Project GRILL as the overall project manager as a precursor to a future in business.

"It was very rewarding in

## At a glance

Kewaskum High School students who participated in Project GRILL were: Ryan Reibe, Tasha Wagner, Eric Sabel, Kolin Knoblauch, Josh Harbin, Chris Wetzels, Jason Geidel, Kyle Walcheske, Nate Westerman, Tanner Timblin, Fred Fellenz, Zach Amerling, Eric Enright, Cody Enright, Ray Wollner, Cody Seibel and Darrell Schraufnagel. Advisors were Patrick Moerchen, Bryan Puls and Kevin Hein.

the sense that we got to do hands-on things," Harbin said. "(But) the communication and leadership skills were the big things that I got out of this project."

Senior Kolin Knoblauch said the project's unique phases made a difference for him.

"It helped improve my design, fabrication, welding and teamwork skills," he said. "We had to work with a large group of people, and we had to make sure everyone got all the messages and everything done, which is how many jobs are today."

Junior Tasha Wagner enjoyed being a part of the progression of the grill, from conception to completion.

"I didn't really have any idea about what it would be like, considering it was something brand new for the school," she said. "(But) being able to see the grill from the drawing phase to the actual product was pretty sweet. We were able to get a better idea of what it was like to finish a project in more of a 'real world' setting."