

# Handley team takes home Widget Cup

By **CHRISTOPHER EARLEY**  
The Winchester Star

**WINCHESTER** — It was an industrious scene of flying sawdust, spinning drills and teamwork at Saturday's Widget Cup.

More importantly, however, the four teams of local high school students learned valuable life lessons while competing, Frederick County officials said.

Held at Millbrook High School, this was the second year for the design-and-build, STEM-based (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) competition. It featured teams from James Wood, Sherando, Millbrook and Handley high schools that were comprised of students enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) classes.

More than 10 local businesses, Winchester and Frederick County public schools and the Frederick County Economic Development Authority (EDA) partnered to facilitate the contest.

Following a full morning — including an hour of design and three hours of building — the John Handley High School Judges walked away with the cup, and each member earned a \$100 gift card.

Frederick County EDA Business Coordinator Sally Michaels said Saturday that the teams were given a "customer," and they built their widget in accordance with provided specifications.

This year's customer, the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum in Winchester, requested a mobile bookshelf with three sides, with a list of specifications for the teams to follow.

Teams toiled in the school's shop room with materials donated by sponsors, while parents and friends watched a live feed of the action on a giant screen in the auditorium.

"These students were very focused," Michaels said. "I never



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Noe Jimenez, of Handley High School, cuts metal for a three-sided bookshelf for the Shenandoah Valley Museum during the Widget Cup held at Millbrook High School Saturday morning.

saw any of them use the bathroom or go take a break."

In addition to learning how to build a product based on a customer's request, Michaels said the students also networked with sponsors and volunteers.

At last year's inaugural event, a Sherando student even earned himself an internship with one of the businesses, Michaels said.

The previous event called for teams to build a workbench for people with disabilities.

"This year's competition is a little different from the last one and is more complex and challenging," said Winchester Metals President Josh Phelps, who originally came up with the idea for the competition.

As the 1 p.m. deadline loomed, however, several projects remained unfinished. And as the horn sounded to signify time was up, Michaels said the uncompleted projects should serve as an im-

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Sherando teammates Justin McDonald (with saw) and Justin Petrie cut a piece of plywood at the Widget Cup competition.

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portant lesson about life and the business world.

“Sometimes you have a big project and plans don’t work out,” she told the teams. “You may need a little extra time, and that happens. Be proud of the work you’ve done.”

The teams later brought their projects to the auditorium, where each pitched the items to a panel of judges and shared the thought process that accompanied the design-and-build portion of the competition.

“We really put a lot of thought

into this,” said Millbrook High School team member Madalyn Swaner. “We really had to work as a team, and each person was assigned to a specific area. Sadly, we didn’t finish it.”

“I’ve been impressed watching them work,” Phelps said. “Lots of



Lots of problem-solving and teamwork, all things you like to see in our future workforce.

— **Josh Phelps**  
President, Winchester Metals

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