

Grand Blanc students take second in snow sculpting competition

by Scott Michael Atkinson | Grand Blanc News

Friday January 30, 2009, 3:04 PM



Scott Michael Atkinson | Grand Blanc News The Grand Blanc High School snow sculpting team poses by their second-place sculpture. From left: Senior Tom Perakovic, junior Rebecca Thresher, senior Carla Harden, senior Adria Palinsky and high school art teacher and team adviser Steve Barker.

FRANKENMUTH, Michigan — For the team of Grand Blanc High School art students that competed in Zehnder's Snowfest student snow sculpting competition, it was all about having fun.

"(Some other students) were making comments and being really competitive, and we were just having fun," said senior Adria Palinsky, captain of the sculpting team.

That strategy seemed to pay off. It was their first competition, and out of the 17 sculptures from 15 schools, Grand Blanc took second place.

"They were very happy and very surprised at the same time," art teacher and team adviser Steve Barker said.

Barker didn't compete this year, but had competed with his own team for years at the international snow sculpting competition, also held during Snowfest. His former team won first place this year.

The students' sculpture was an abstract design of a male and female figure embracing. From front to back, the two figures "morphed" into sculptures representing the opposite sex.

"I could just say it's an abstract," Adria said after giving the lengthy description to yet another curious passerby, "but then I'd sound like a pretentious arty."

The female half was carved into a curvy design, while the male figure was more block-like.

The students started with a block of man-made snow 8 feet tall and 6 feet wide. Using a scale-sized grid with a sketch of the design, the students spray painted the basic outline onto the block and started chipping, shaving, brushing and chopping away snow using a variety of tools.

Most of the tools came from the hardware store or were Barker's own creations. They included shovels, hatchets, trowels, metal brushes and a piece of scaffolding allowing them to reach -- or climb on -- the top of the sculpture.

"This is part of the problem solving," Barker said as they chose whatever tool they might need. "I can give them direction, but they do it all."

Barker said it was hard not to jump in and start carving.

The team made the drive to Frankenmuth on Jan. 22 and 23, after finishing their school exams, which took up the first half of each day. On their first day they worked until 11 p.m.

While the spectators might have enjoyed the warmer temperatures the second day, the team was worried. The perfect conditions for snow sculpting are about 20 degrees and cloudy.

"If you do any detail work, (the sun) will just eat it right up," Barker said.

Senior Tom Perakovic said he liked the warmer temperature, which gave him the ability to pack the snow into areas where they may have carved away too much.

The fun attitude was apparent while the students worked, making jokes and occasionally dropping snow onto their teammates while working from the scaffolding, which Tom blamed on the wind.

The team received a second-place plaque and each of the members received a medal. They also won \$150. Barker said he and the team are still thinking about how to spend it.

"At the (awards) banquet, when they said Grand Blanc, they just jumped up," Barker said of his team.