

Students bring scientists to life

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

Samuel Morse, C. Harold Smith and Edwin Binney, Walter Diemer, and Robert Fulton gathered in the gymnasium of St. Louis School in Pittsford on Jan. 29, thanks to the efforts of 93 students and four teachers.

How did the inventors of the telegraph, Crayola crayons, bubble gum and the steamboat end up in Pittsford? Fifth- and sixth-grade students spent several months researching and writing about the lives of inventors and scientists, creating posterboard displays about what they learned. During Catholic Schools Week they dressed up as their chosen inventors and scientists and shared their knowledge with others.

Therefore, it was not unusual to see Pierre Curie and Clarence Birdseye — otherwise known as sixth-grader Victoria Battle and fifth-grader Madeleine Keefe — standing in front of posterboards explaining Curie's work in magnetism and Bird-

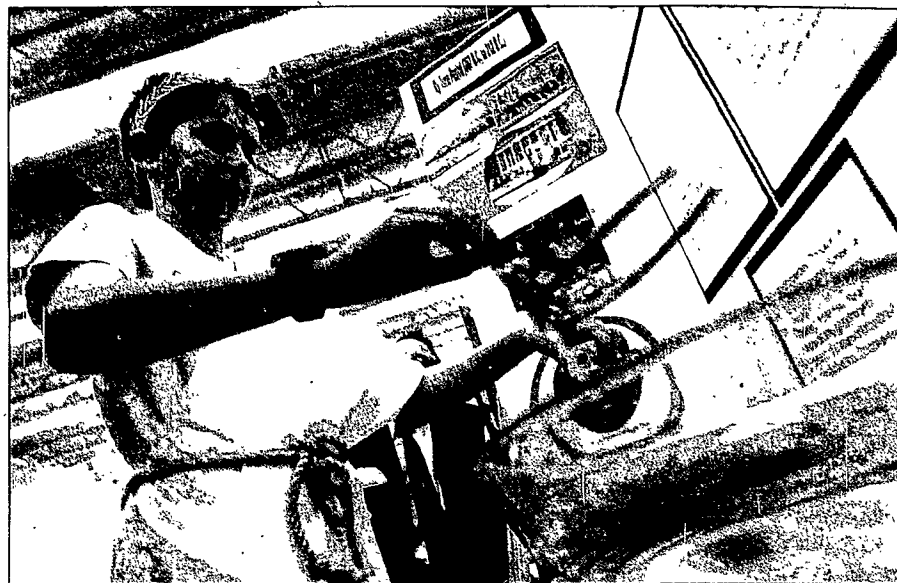
seye's perfection of the quick-freezing process that revolutionized the frozen-food industry. Victoria said she decided to learn about Curie because she didn't know very much about him.

"We got to pick who we wanted to be. I like to get to know someone new. I think it was a great experience for learning," she said.

Madeleine's display included a timeline of Birdseye's life, as well as information about him and his company, Birds Eye Foods. She said she enjoyed learning about Birdseye and having the opportunity to be creative.

"I liked (the project) because it's sort of a really creative thing and you can learn about things while you're having fun. I just started coming up with these ideas," she said.

Creativity was a big part of many other projects. Fifth-grader Ashley Infantino cut many of the letters on her poster board about Levi Strauss, the inventor of denim jeans, out of a



Mike Crup/Catholic Courier

After spending several months researching the lives of inventors and scientists, fifth- and sixth-graders at Pittsford's St. Louis School presented their findings Jan. 29 during a Scientist and Inventors Fair. Twelve-year-old Tyler Laurito, dressed as his research subject, Archimedes, demonstrates the scientist's principal of buoyancy.

pair of her brother's outgrown jeans. Her classmate, Angela Smith, brought in a fireman's coat to demonstrate one of the uses of Kevlar, which was invented by Stephanie Kwolek.

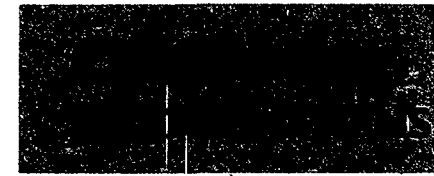
Angela said she chose to learn about Kwolek because she was a female inventor. There was only one female on the list of inventors fifth-graders had to choose from, so she looked through her own book of female inventors and asked her teacher for permission to study Kwolek.

"She was a scientist and an inventor. She invented something that really saves people's lives," Angela said.

Betsy Morgan's fifth-grade science teacher, Mary Diamond, suggested she learn about Charles Babbage, who is often referred to as the father of computing. Betsy put together a presentation explaining how Babbage came up with computing machines that helped pave the way for modern-day personal computers.

"They really took this to heart," Diamond said of her students.

Dana Kusak said she's always enjoyed learning about mechanical things, so she chose to learn about Elisha Otis, who designed an elevator safety device, making high-rise buildings practical in the 1800s. Her classmate, Doug Leclair, sported oversized fake glasses and a suit coat with a pocket full of play money, assuming the appearance of Bill Gates. Another classmate, Nick



Fazio, explained in his presentation that his chosen inventor Charles Macintosh did not invent the Apple computer — but he did invent waterproof fabrics, which are used to make raincoats.

To help with her portrayal of Thomas Jefferson, fifth-grader Maggie Gelke wore an actual jacket from the United States Military Academy at West Point, where her father had studied. Fifth-grader Kathryn Geen decided to learn about Isaac Singer, inventor of the sewing machine, because she already knew a little about him. While visiting relatives in Massachusetts over Thanksgiving, fifth-grader Sam Colliss and his family went to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame so he could research Dr. James Naismith, the game's inventor. Fifth-grader Addie Cunningham visited Rochester's George Eastman house to prepare for her project on Kodak's founder.

"We didn't want to have a typical science fair. They brought figures from history to life," said sixth-grade science teacher Sue Cutaia. "It really did bring in language-arts skills, as well as science, presenting, social studies, math and reading. This helped keep their interest, which is what we wanted."



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