

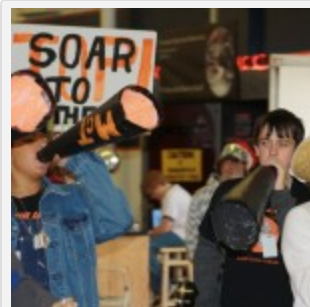


COSAM Covalence E-News, December 2009

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COSAM Co-hosts the South's BEST Robotics Championship



Booths were displayed around the concourse of Beard-Eaves Memorial Coliseum. These students paraded their support prior to the competition.

Auburn University welcomed some 3500 people on campus in December for the 7th annual BEST Championship, a robotics competition co-hosted by COSAM and the Samuel E. Ginn College of Engineering, and supported by the School of Architecture. The University serves as the headquarters for this nationally growing program.

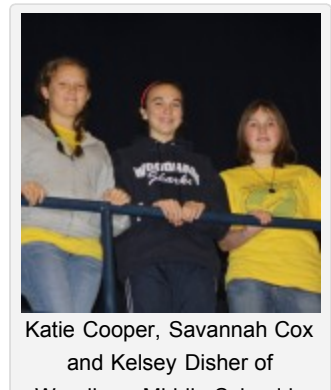
Over the past nine years, COSAM and the College of Engineering have been instrumental in developing the "BEST in Alabama" model with a goal of reaching as many students as possible in the state. Five local hubs around the state hosted the first wave of competitions with more than 100 middle and high schools participating. The program is volunteer driven, providing access to a national competition for all schools.

"Because the program is free to schools, it is particularly effective in rural areas of the state that may not have the resources to support similar extracurricular-academic programs for students," says Mary Lou Ewald, COSAM outreach director and a member of the BEST board of directors.

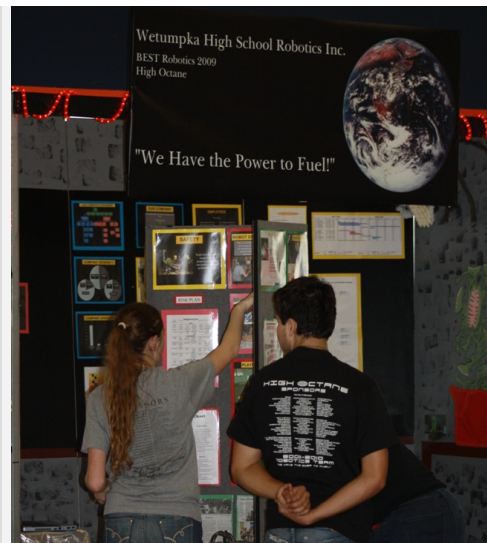
Tara Powell of Oak Mountain, Ala., sees BEST as an avenue for her son to be recruited by colleges much like athletes or musicians. "BEST gives my son, who is a senior, an opportunity to represent his school. He doesn't play sports or a musical instrument, so it gives him exposure to a college he might not have ever had," Powell says, noting that 2009 marked Oak Mountain High School's second advancement to the state finals.

Kelsey Disher, an 8th grader from Woodham Middle School in Pensacola, Fla., sums it up as, "We love it! Math and science are the best."

Wetumpka High School of Wetumpka, Ala., took top honors at the [competition](#) beating 55 other teams from nine states east of the Mississippi River.



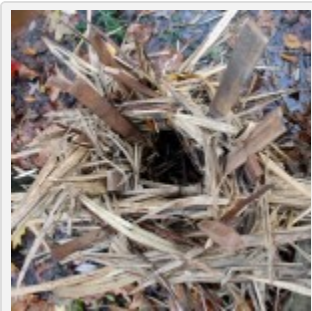
Katie Cooper, Savannah Cox and Kelsey Disher of Woodham Middle School



Championship winner Wetumpka High School's booth displayed in coliseum concourse.

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When Art Meets Science



A bird's eye view of Plaster's nest sculpture.

Throughout the month of November, junior and senior art students were found creating sculptures at the COSAM Donald E. Davis Arboretum. The sculpture project was part of an annual class called Sculpture as Space that is taught by Christopher McNulty, an associate professor of studio art in the College of Liberal Arts.

McNulty required his students to explore how notions of nature and culture intersect in the Arboretum and in art, and to consider the range of approaches that historic and contemporary artists have taken to the landscape, from manipulative to integrative, and to find an attitude that is compatible with their own aesthetic sensibilities.

This interdisciplinary project, which works to combine science and nature with art, posed several challenges for senior art student Jim Plaster, who worked to create a series of sculpted nests. "I wanted to emphasize a difference between how we

would build a nest versus how a bird would build a nest," Plaster says.

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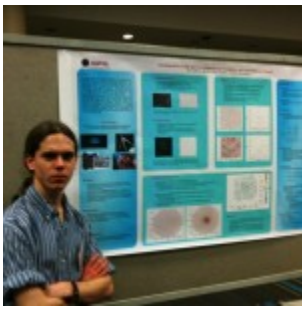
COSAM Ph.D. Student Studies in Antarctica



COSAM Ph.D. student Alexis Janosik, Biological Sciences, has embarked on a 56-day research expedition to Western Antarctica headed by the British Antarctic Survey. As part of an international team, Janosik will be studying the evolution and biogeographic distributions of Antarctic animals, especially sea stars. Her work with Dr. Ken Halanych of the William P. and Ruth W. Molette Environmental and Climate Change Studies Laboratory in Biological Sciences will help elucidate responses to global climate change by fauna in arguably the fastest warming area on the planet.

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COSAM Undergraduate Wins Award



COSAM student Robert Jefferson, Physics, won an award for Outstanding Undergraduate Student Presentation at the 51st annual American Physical Society - Division of Plasma Physics (APS-DPP) meeting held in Atlanta, Ga.

The APS-DPP meeting is the largest annual gathering of plasma physicists with more than 1500 student and professional presentations made over the week-long meeting. Jefferson's presentation titled "Development of One- and Two- dimensional Simulations of a Thermal Dusty Plasma" was the culmination of more than a year's development work in the laboratory of Dr. Edward Thomas, COSAM physics professor.

For more information about the dusty plasma research at Auburn University, click [here](#).

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COSAM Supports Toys for Tots



Since 1995, COSAM administrators, faculty and students have supported the Toys for Tots campaign, donating more than 3,500 gifts to the area's needy children.

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COSAM Digital Updates



[Toys for Tots](#)



[COSAM Scrubbing for Germs](#)



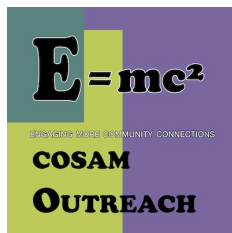
[Episode 22: Marine Biology Faculty and Students Visit the Gulf of Mexico Floor](#)

[It's That Time Again...](#)

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