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ELECTRIC NEWS

Their gamble pays off

JC trio wins awards at global entrepreneurship contest with their solution to gaming addiction

By Liew Hanqing

August 05, 2008

WHILE their competitors focused on tackling problems like poverty and pollution, they focused on an often-ignored issue - gaming addiction.

And that game plan won the trio from Jurong Junior College a gold medal at the Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship (Sage) World Cup competition last month.

They beat 11 other teams from six countries.

The team, consisting of JC 2 students Tan Ying Quan, 18, Chibuzo Nwankpo, 17, and Shazwi Suwandi, 18, also received the competition's Boschee Award for the business venture that best integrates social and financial objectives.

They took home a trophy and a cash prize of US\$2,000 (\$2,700), which they are donating to the school.

The Sage World Cup, which was held in Nigeria this year, is a prestigious international competition for youth social entrepreneurship.

The JJC team's solution to gaming addiction seems counter-intuitive - an e-gaming centre. It was set up in the school last year for the students to patronise after their lessons.

The centre was featured in The New Paper last year, when it was set up.

Sceptics may believe otherwise, but the team believes students can enjoy video gaming in a healthy way.

Said Ying Quan: 'Many gaming centres are dark and rowdy, with many of the gamers using vulgarities.

'But our centre is a conducive environment for gaming.'

The centre has 41 computer stations, and is brightly-lit and cosy.

The house rules of the e-gaming centre prohibit students from spewing vulgarities. They are allowed to play for only a maximum of three hours after school.

Students pay just \$2 an hour to play games there.

And true to their cause, the students regularly organise talks on healthy gaming habits, and how to prevent gaming addiction.

At the Sage World Cup, held from 23-25 Jul, the students had to present their business model in front of an international panel of judges, as well as teams from Brazil, Ghana, Nigeria, South Korea, Tanzania and the US.

Ms Tiong Le Chin, the teacher-in-charge who accompanied the students on the trip, said she was amazed by the enthusiasm of the JJC team.

'You can tell they actively tried to engage the audience. They were passionate about what they were doing, and they made the audience laugh,' she recalled.

The team said that aside from their win, the highlight of the trip was meeting competitors from all over the world.

It was a happy homecoming, too, for Chibuzo, a Nigerian studying in Singapore.

He said: 'I enjoyed the feeling of presenting our project in my own country. I felt like it made my fellow Nigerians look up to me in a way, because I have done well in Singapore.'

And for Shazwi, it was hearing the different experiences of other contestants which was most memorable.

'It was quite an experience, because the way they study and do business is completely different from the way it is done here,' he said.

The main difference, he said, was the great emphasis Singapore places on academic achievements.

'There is a lot more support for youth entrepreneurship in other countries,' he said.

To prepare for the competition, the team spent nearly four hours every day after school working on their presentation.

Recalled Ying Quan, who will be sitting for his A Levels this year: 'It was tough. We'd see other people studying for their A Levels, but we didn't really had much time to study.'

But the team has made a pact to study hard for the A Levels because they all hope to get places in overseas universities.

'Who knows, we may make it to Stanford or Harvard,' a beaming Ying Quan said.

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(From left) Jurong Junior College students Chibuzo Nwankpo, Shazwi Suwandi and Tan Ying Quan say students can enjoy video gaming in a healthy way. -- Picture: CHOO CHWEE HUA



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