



**LOCAL STUDENTS WIN GRAND PRIZE  
AT NATIONAL COMPETITION FOR TOY INVENTORS**

*"Make-A-Splash" Pool Game by "AquaGamers" From St. Mary Magdalen Catholic School in Altamonte Springs Gets Top Award from TOYchallenge 2008 Held in Metro Washington*

MAY 17, 2008 - St. Mary Magdalen Catholic School students Ethan Brennan, Anna Burbank, Sarah Joyce, Lauren Nunez, Shandy Sulen and Tucker Smith, known collectively as the team AquaGamers, were grand prize winners of the Sally Ride Science TOYchallenge™ 2008 Nationals at the United States Patent and Trademark Office, held in Alexandria, Va., on May 17th. The team, led by teacher/coach Deborah Gordon and assisting coach June Smith, was one of hundreds of teams of students from across the country that participated in TOYchallenge, a fun-fueled toy- and game-design competition that gives kids the chance to step out of their classrooms and develop their engineering and design skills by creating their dream toy. The AquaGamers attend Grade 6 at St. Mary Magdalen Catholic School in Altamonte Springs, Fl.

([www.smmschool.org](http://www.smmschool.org)). They presented to the judges at the TOYchallenge Nationals a game they designed for the pool. Called "Make-A-Splash", their invention, which includes waterproof cards and other game pieces created by the students, is a floating board that encourages players to learn pool safety as they practice swimming.

"It was one of the most exciting experiences I have ever had," summed up Tucker Smith of Altamonte Springs about the win at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

"I still can't believe that something created by us won a national competition," said AquaGamer, Anna Burbank, who lives in Maitland. The live competition included 111 finalist teams. As Grand Prize winners, the students earned round trip tickets anywhere in the country from sponsor Southwest Airlines. "The students were really excited about the idea of a toy for the pool, because they knew the judges would be looking for something unique. For teams from Florida, it was a natural idea," said teacher Deborah

Gordon. "But they also were challenged to make it fun and make it work in the water. They put a lot of creative thought into Make-A-Splash." Deborah Gordon teaches the school's gifted students program. The AquaGamers brainstormed several ideas for their game before coming up with the winning design that included recycling a giant plastic trash can lid, water bottles and bottle caps to create the main board piece. Then they devised questions on pool safety and challenges for beginning to advance swimmers. Played in the pool, swimmers get the answer correct or complete a challenge to advance around the board and make it first to the winner's circle. "I enjoyed having Mrs. Gordon as our coach. She made sure we were working hard and having fun," said Sarah Joyce of Altamonte Springs.

### ***Judging the winning entry***

For the competition's Preliminary Round, the teams, comprised of at least 50 percent girls, submitted written descriptions and visual presentations of their original toy or game concepts based on themed categories including Games for the Family, Get Out and Play, and Toys that Teach. The submissions were judged on originality, creativity, feasibility, design process description, team participation and clarity of communication. In picking AquaGamers for Nationals, judges said they liked the design – from concept to its bright colors. They offered these comments on the Make-A-Splash entry: "Great idea in designing a game for the pool. ... Overall, a fun idea with great potential."

At the Nationals, one grand prize package was awarded, and one team was named the category prize winner in each theme category. "Make-A-Splash" by the AquaGamers, which won the grand prize overall, was designed in the "Get Out and Play" category. TOYchallenge ([www.TOYchallenge.com](http://www.TOYchallenge.com)) is designed to engage middle school-age students, especially girls, in science and engineering and to inspire them to pursue careers in those fields. TOYchallenge is created and run by Sally Ride Science, in partnership with United States Patent and Trademark Office. Northrop Grumman is the presenting sponsor. Southwest Airlines is the official airline of TOYchallenge. "Next I want to have our game patented and maybe even have it put on the market," said student Ethan Brennan, a resident of Maitland. "I also can't wait to do the Toychallenge again next year." "Doing this competition has taught me that no matter what age you are, you can accomplish anything and reach for the stars," said teammate 6th-grader Lauren Nunez, who lives in Altamonte Springs.

### ***About St. Mary Magdalen Catholic School***

St. Mary Magdalen Catholic School is a vibrant educational community located in the heart of Central Florida in Altamonte Springs. St. Mary Magdalen School teaches students in grades kindergarten through Grade 8. In 2006, St. Mary Magdalen School was awarded the "No-Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon School Award". This is the highest award given to a school by the United States Department of Education.

### ***About Sally Ride Science***

Sally Ride Science is an innovative science content company dedicated to fueling girls' and boys' interests in science, math and technology. Dr. Sally Ride, best known as America's first woman in space, founded the company in 2001 to create quality programs and products that educate, entertain, engage and inspire. Our programs include Sally Ride Science Festivals, TOYchallenge, Educator Institutes, summer camps, and after-school programs. Our publications include award-winning science books, science career books, and innovative Classroom Sets to supplement science instruction. Our publications and

programs bring science to life and show kids that science is creative, collaborative, fascinating and fun. For more information go to [www.SallyRideScience.com](http://www.SallyRideScience.com) or call 1-800-561-5161.

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