

# FPS experience helps in college

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sure they have some information on each of the 18 categories. They tend to do most of the research on their own and then get together to discuss how it relates to the topic, he says.

Each of the four have their own roles: Ben is the science and technology guy while Zach has a strong background in economics. Suruchi jokingly called Nihar Suthar their team's "funky scientist."

What makes their task a bit easier is that their FPS topics often overlap with subjects they are learning in school.

Suruchi says her economics class just had a debate about the gap between wealth and poverty. Her research for class has helped with the human rights topic for FPS.

Ben says their studies go both ways. He has taken some information from FPS and applied it to his AP chemistry and biology classes, but those classes also have given him ideas for his team.

And the students often see world events coincide with topics that they have studied.

Nihar says two years ago they studied the topic of space junk. Right after the competition, there were concerns about a satellite hitting earth, he remembers.

Ben says at one international competition, their topic was pandemics.

"It was ironic because some teams couldn't come (to the competition) because of swine flu," he says.

Anderson says the competition gives the students a deeper perspective on issues that our world leaders face.

"They understand it's not al-

ways easy to come up with a quick fix," he says. "They see the difficulties a government has in coming up with a solution and understand the parameters that exist."

During competitions, the teams' creativity skills also are put to the test. They are required to write a skit using a mystery prop to present their problem solution.

Suruchi says one year they were given a whisk. Using it they whipped up a puppet named Grandma Whisk who narrated their plan.

Ben says the mystery props seem kind of goofy and dumb, but they challenge teams to present information in an interesting way.

"You don't want to be boring and just say such and such," he says.

Being part of the program also has taken many Mifflin County students a few steps closer to academic and career success.

Suruchi, who plans to study business in college, believes the

research and analytical skills that she learned in FPS will give her a jump start on her post-secondary education.

Recently, she was accepted to Carnegie Mellon University based, in part, on an essay she wrote about her involvement with FPS.

"It definitely gave me an advantage," she says.

Fowler says he plans to study a hard science in college.

"Science affects everything else," Fowler notes. "It's not in a bubble. It affects relationships, legal matters."

The depth of understanding involved in FPS, Fowler says, has made him realize how everything relates.

FPS alumnus Samantha Wheeler, who is studying accounting and management information systems at Villanova University, has kept ties with the organization through college.

This year she became a co-affiliate director for the Pennsylvania Future Problem Solvers, but that is only one of the many efforts in which she is involved.

"I could probably run off 25 more things," Wheeler says.

She says the teamwork aspect of FPS was a valuable learning experience and described it as synergy, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

"I'd definitely pick my FPS team over any I've worked with in college," she says.

Alumnus Suchir Sheth graduated from Penn State in May and plans to go on to achieve his master's degree in dentistry before going to medical school.

FPS, he says, taught him to immediately go into thinking mode and challenge ideas.

And alumnus Drew Picketts, a sophomore at Bucknell University, credits his participation in FPS as the reason he won a scholarship to college.

Anderson, the FPS adviser for many years in Mifflin County, simply is proud of his students' accomplishments.

"I've been fortunate that I had the opportunity to work with them," Anderson says. "It pleases me to see how they are succeeding."

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— Jack Anderson, FPS advisor

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