

A doggone clever idea earns student first place in invention contest

by **Jill Huber**

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It was a meeting of clever minds and clever ideas. Haley Shalam of Allenhurst, a fourth-grade student at Hillel Yeshiva in Ocean Township, won first-place honors at the yeshiva's Invention Convention last month.

She was among 54 fourth-grade students who took their creative ideas and put them into practice, according to Susan Rishty, a member of the yeshiva's teaching staff and one of the program's coordinators.

Haley invented an automatic paw cleaner that will help the family dog stay healthy and the family home stay clean, particularly during the cold winter weather. As she described it, the device is the size of an average litter box and is covered with a Plexiglas top that contains a hole for each paw. A hose, complete with hose gun, is connected to an outdoor faucet and runs into the box, which is also equipped with a small pump that dispenses dog shampoo.

As the soap and water mix, the effect is similar to that of a gentle Jacuzzi. The paw cleaner also comes with a mat; when the paws are clean, the dog can be lifted out and placed on the mat until all four paws are dry, said Haley.

Haley tested the device on her family Maltese, who rapidly adjusted to the paw cleaner. After a few test runs, the dog would wait next to the device as soon as he returned from the great outdoors; he now seems to enjoy the cleansing process, she added.

"I discussed the whole idea with our family's veterinarian," said Haley. "He was especially

glad to see that I hadn't used any electricity. Electricity and water don't exactly mix." She came up with the invention after taking her dog for a walk. Haley realized that her pet immediately began to lick off the mud and sidewalk de-icer substance from his paws. She wondered if there was a way to keep him from swallowing chemicals and bacteria and messing up the house.

The answer was the paw cleaner, which will be submitted to the state-wide Student Inventions Through Education competition this spring. The SITE program stresses the development of problem-solving skills in the areas of science, social studies, and language arts.

This year's invention convention, which took place Jan. 9-10, has been an annual program at the yeshiva for the past 18 years.

The fourth-grade students were asked to develop an original idea for an invention or innovation and to move their ideas from concept to project completion. After submitting the ideas to their teachers for consideration, the students were shown how to use a variety of resources, such as the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, to determine if their ideas were original, Rishty said.

The students also kept logs that detailed the progress of each stage of the invention process. "They brainstormed, surveyed, identified problems, tested possible solutions, researched, and finally created an invention," said Rishty.



The projects were judged by a panel that included Daniel Rosensweig, the yeshiva's librarian; Ron Hopkins, director of facilities; Elizabeth Demsky-Beckerman, marketing coordinator; and Harold Goldman, an attorney with Ansell, Zaro, and Grimm of Ocean Township.

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