

Schools



Photo by Shirley A. McShane

Brownell's Solar Team includes, standing left to right, Kevin Fisher, Rob Cramer, Matt Shirilla, Kevin Hall, Gregg Charvat, Mike Paradise (kneeling) and Steve Murphy (riding). Members not pictured are: Peter Blain, Gary Bordato, Rachel Blair, Ben Wei, Chris Chapman, Ted Fortier, Jay Dillaman and Russell Fried.

Student Spotlight

Elizabeth Davisson

Each week in this column we focus on the work of a student. It can be a poem or short story or essay.

Elizabeth Davisson is in the first grade at Maire Elementary School in the City of Grosse Pointe. She is the daughter of



Brownell's Electrike energizes tech student

By Shirley A. McShane
Staff Writer

Students and staff at Brownell school still look twice when they see Kerry Pytel or a member of the Solar Team coming.

They never know what to expect. Last week Pytel and team members rode the second prototype of their Electrike up and down the hallways, its small battery-operated engine whirring as the bicycle-like vehicle flew past a half-dozen students.

The Electrike has been in the making since February, when technology teacher Pytel and the newly formed Solar Team received about \$2,000 in grant money to fund their project.

"The purpose of the club is to design and to construct an alternative energy vehicle capable of transporting a person," Pytel said. "The students originally wanted to design a solar bike (which explains the team's name) but there wasn't enough time."

Instead, students began their project with an idea of an elec-

tric bike, a set of plans from a now-defunct Canadian company that built recumbent cycles and scrap bike parts.

Pytel encouraged team members to write letters of inquiry to local businesses, corporations, universities and service organizations.

"We always asked for used parts and equipment, but everyone gave us new equipment. This really has been a community project," Pytel said.

Sponsors include Roy O'Brien Ford, the Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency, Start-All Enterprises, Ramsey Winch Co. and the Grosse Pointe Rotary. Pytel said Pierce and Parcels middle schools also have donated equipment to the project. Brownell engineers Ted Reaume and Nick Woods also lent their expertise to the team, he said.

The first prototype was built in May using bike parts designed to handle the force of one-half horsepower, Pytel explained. When the Electrike was fitted with a high-power electric motor — a power source

five times as potent as what the parts could withstand, the bike broke apart.

"Pieces were flying all over like it was a popcorn popper," he said, noting that he conducts all test drives.

The second prototype was completed last week and after it was test driven, team members were able to ride it to determine what problems needed to be fixed.

"The team does most of the work on its own," Pytel said. "They come up with the ideas that I either approve or reject. You know, I have told them to do things a certain way and sometimes it's been wrong. Some of these kids are so bright."

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Pytel was mer when h nology confe electric bike had been r school team.

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