

# Milton hosts 20th annual Delaware Envirothon competition

*Three Sussex Tech teams compete in statewide event*

By Maddy Lauria | May 11, 2015



*Photo by: Maddy Lauria* Sussex Tech High School juniors (l-r) Trace Deleon, Cole Collins and Bret Warrington work as a team to identify an insect during the 20th annual Delaware Envirothon in Milton April 30.

**MILTON** — Sussex Tech High School seniors Emma O'Donnell and Megan Davidson, both 17, have no qualms about sticking their hands in a bucket full of dirt to examine soil samples a little more closely.

And neither girl balks at two samples of feces sitting in Petri dishes. They both have a pretty good idea of which belongs to a carnivore and which came from an herbivore.

It can get a little dirty at the Delaware Envirothon, a hands-on environmental-based competition for high school students, but O'Donnell and Davidson agree it's a fun learning experience that's preparing them for a future environmental career.

O'Donnell and Davidson joined more than 100 students in Milton April 30 to compete for awards and scholarships during the 20th annual Delaware Envirothon competition.

O'Donnell of Rehoboth Beach said participating in the event – this is the third contest for hopeful environmental scientist – is preparing her for the challenges she'll face in college environmental classes.

“We really like the educational portion and being able to compete with other schools,” she said while rinsing the remains of the soil sample from her hands.

This year's competition featured students from 11 Delaware schools, including Sussex Tech High School as the only Sussex County representative. While the majority of schools – and the top victors – were from New Castle County, the competition headed south this year for the theme of urban forestry, ideally situated near the neighborhood of Cannery Village and Dogfish Head Craft Brewery in Milton, said event chair Rick Mickowski.

Mickowski said 24 teams vied for thousands of dollars in prizes – the biggest year ever.

“We want to continue to increase participation, especially in Sussex County,” he said, noting that while other southern schools have participated in the past, Sussex Tech High School has been the most consistent Sussex County participant.

Envirothon includes challenges such as insect and plant identification, evaluating soil samples and other tests that challenge students' critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making skills related to ecology, air quality, forestry, wildlife, soils and land use and public speaking. Students participated in oral presentations and about three hours of testing during the competition. Each year has a different theme, Mickowski said, and next year's competition will focus on invasive species.

“It's a way to get high school students engaged in natural resource topics and potential careers,” he said. “It's a good event they can study for throughout the year.”

Focusing on the theme of urban forestry, O'Donnell said it's important for locals to recognize how the environment plays a role in their every day lives, including the carefully planted rows of trees in a new neighborhood.

“It's about creating an environment that's useful for humans and still liveable for the flora and fauna,” she said.

At the end of the day, O'Donnell and her teammates said that while Envirothon is a friendly competition, it's really about doing something they love.

“We're here to have fun and learn,” O'Donnell said.

For more information about the Delaware Envirothon, go to [www.delawareenvirothon.org](http://www.delawareenvirothon.org).



Sussex Tech seniors Megan Davidson, left, and Emma O'Donnell examine soil samples during the 20th annual Delaware Envirothon in Milton April 30. *(Photo by: Maddy Lauria)*



More than 100 Delaware students traveled to Milton April 30 for the 20th annual Delaware Envirothon.  
(Photo by: Maddy Lauria)



Sussex Tech High School was represented by three teams in this year's Envirothon, including Team B members (l-r) Cole Collins, Emma O'Donnell, Trace Deleon, Megan Davidson and Bret Warrington. *(Photo by: Maddy Lauria)*



Charter School of Wilmington Team A (l-r) Miles Wang, Sriram Cyr, Gina Zhu, Isaac Kempton and Vickram Rajendran took home first place at the 20th annual Delaware Envirothon. Each student earned a \$500 scholarship for the placement. *(Photo by: Maddy Lauria)*



Charter School of Wilmington Team C (l-r) Silvana Alfieri, John Garcia, Alana Duke, Siddhartha Gangrade and Advaita Anne took home second place at the 20th annual Delaware Envirothon. *(Photo by: Maddy Lauria)*