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Life

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Most kids imagine what it would be like to live on the moon. Not many of them design and build a model lunar city that addresses practical questions about how life on the moon would function. But that's what five Bellingham middle schoolers did this year, with a project that took them all the way to the finals of the international Future City Competition.

The team of five Bellingham tweens, a mix of home-school and public-school students, completed their project without ever meeting in person. Their city, Mizari Andalli (a combination of first syllables from their names), featuring four biodomes and a working spaceport, won first place among Washington's 23 teams in January. They competed against the other 41 regional champions in the Future City Finals in March. The virtual Future City Awards Celebration, to be livestreamed on Wednesday, April 7, will announce the winners, who will receive a grand-prize trip to Space Camp and \$7,500 for their school's STEM program.

Seventh graders David Thomas, Ansley Hardy and Michael Mittag competed in Future City together as a team last year with David's mother, Jennifer Thomas, as the Team Educator. This year they added two new members: seventh grader Zander Tran and eighth grader Lily Connot.

The virtual format meant students missed out on some things, like talking with other teams and improving their presentation over time. For David, recording the video presentation was the hardest part. It took 10 tries in Zoom before they got it right, and when the final take didn't record, they had to try again another day. The final video is available [online](#).

But the virtual format had advantages, too. The telescopes that Washington state regional winners received as a prize instead of a trip to the finals in D.C. sparked his new interest in astronomy. And even though he can list from memory the mineral content of lunar regolith (one of the lunar resources the team used), he said, “Most of what I learned was about things like how to use technology and stuff. I learned that, man, shared Google docs can be so useful.”

The modular biodome design enabled each team member to contribute equally to the model while the virtual format helped keep the team on track.

“One big difference this year is there was a lot less arguing — except about the ‘no private pets’ discussion. A lot of people wanted pets,” he said. That conflict was resolved with cat cafes.

Future City Awards Celebration

Livestreams at 10 a.m. Wednesday, April 7, at futurecity.org or facebook.com/FutureCityCompetition; free

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