

This engineering club event did not leave Alleman students singing the Blues

Through BluTrack donation/demonstration students learn physics in fun way

In some ways, it looked like an upgraded Hot Wheels track from years ago. But a closer look, which is certainly what the Alleman Engineering Club was taking Thursday afternoon, reveals it was a whole lot more.



Engineering club students, from left, Parker Smith, Evan Gryp, Tommy Skahill and Zach Larson do some testing.

First a marble raced down an incline track vs. another marble going down one with a about a two-foot descent. Racing what appeared, but was not the same distance, the marble with the two-foot descent clearly won.

So BluTrack owner and inventor Randy Belding changed the set-up a bit. Still, the winner was the marble on the track with the large descent, even though it had a longer way to go by a foot or so. Eventually, Belding made the track's descent so large, the marble on the linear track won as the marble on the nonlinear track simply struggled to get

up the huge incline that fol-



-lowed. “The fastest the object falls is at a perfect arc between those two lines,” Belding explained to the about 10 students on hand.

As students sent Hot Wheels cars down the gray

BluTrack inventor Randy Belding and his marketing director Jeff Borland demonstrate how their product works to Alleman students Cole Caleo and Nathan Graves among others in Alleman’s Engineering Club.

BluTrack tracks, what was going on most definitely by design was a learning experience.

BluTrack allows students to work with the shape of the track to determine speed and learn physics and principles of speed and motion. “We are just hoping to see what they can do with the track,” said BluTrack marketing director Jeff Borland who said at Alleman the track they gave the school also allowed them to demonstrate it’s use, which was a plus for BluTrack. The company also want to interest students in STEM (science, technology, engineering, math).

Physics and engineering concepts were definitely being taught. But Belding wants the students to do some thinking. That’s his main goal, in fact.

“As a a general rule, what we really want, whether it’s teaching physics or kids just playing, we want them to understand there is structure everywhere,” Belding said. “And that it’s more fun to think about the design than it is to actually play with it.

“We want them to challenge themselves to just think. And design their own (courses). We want them , this sounds strange, and parents sometimes will look

at me a little odd but I'd rather have a kid to try something that does not work and then fix it, than try something that works every time. Because you don't learn anything if it works every time. We want them to try stuff that just might not work. We want them to push that envelope. That engineering envelope."

Bluetrack.com is the website.

Sophomore Zachary Larson said running the marbles and the cars on the tracks was fun. And he added, he learned a little physics. "Heavier stuff is better for different things and lighter is better for others."

The whole experience definitely was fun, Larson said.

Sister Benedicta said the men donated five tracks in all, which were put to great use the next day, bringing fun and excitement to the whole learning experience. She clearly embraced the BluTrack concept of students learning hands-on through design. "We used it in all classes today," she said. "It brought excitement to the room."

BluTrack is there for fun or learning. It sells its materials to schools through Nasco. But it has three main products and also sells through Amazon and ToysRUS.com. Its product line can be found at www.blutrack.com

■ **Alleman Alumni Relations Director Jim Meenan**