

# National Association of Women in Construction Sponsors 2010 Block Kids Contest

By Diane Andrews

Judging by the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) members who facilitated the 2010 Block Kids Contest, not all women in construction wear hardhats like the Rosie the Riveters of WWII who paved the way for NAWIC in 1955.

Jennifer Krencik, contest chairperson for NAWIC's Santa Clara Chapter 99, works on the accounting side of construction.

"Block Kids is one of many educational competitions NAWIC has to educate children about the construction industry. We try to talk to them about

the different arms of construction," Krencik says. "In this contest, we want them to build something construction related. These kids come up with amazing things."

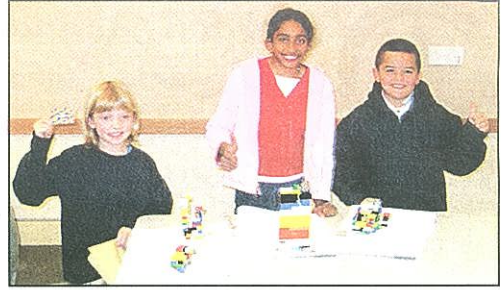
"I was the first female in my high school (in Rockford, Illinois) in the 1970s to take drafting. I had to get special permission," says NAWIC member and architect Heidi Rank, one of the six competition judges. "It's nice that we can work with these kids and open their eyes to a lot of things."

The 45-minute task for each young builder in the local competition on January 12 was to build a structure using one hundred LEGO interlocking blocks in various colors, a small rock, a short length of string, a rectangle of aluminum foil, and imagination.

First through 6<sup>th</sup> graders from local cities—nine girls and eighteen boys—waited in the children's section of Central Park Library for the free, annual contest to begin at 6 p.m.

"I did it last year. It was fun and you could be creative. I made the Statue of Liberty," says Santa Clara 6<sup>th</sup> grader Durga Ganesh, accompanied by her mom, Lata Ganesh.

"He really likes to play with



2010 Block Kids Contest winners (left to right) Brooke Murphy-Dunning, 1st place; Maya Varma, 2nd place; and Jacob Alvarado, 3rd place; with their winning LEGO constructions.

blocks," says Deepa Poikayil, mom of Santa Clara 1<sup>st</sup> grader Pranav Purathepparambil.

"He's a LEGO guy," says Pranav's Uncle Bijilal Poikayil, who drove from Fremont to give moral support.

While the competition was in progress, relatives had to wait outside the closed doors of the Redwood Room. Each contestant was interviewed by one judge, who assigned points for project creativity, attention to detail, use of provided materials, their oral presentation, enthusiasm, and reason for participating.

When time was up, the kids left the room, and the judges selected the high-scoring winners. Photos of the LEGO structure

winning first place will be entered in a regional competition, and the winning structure from each NAWIC region will be entered in the national competition.

After the contest, participants got pizza and a bag of prizes. The top three 2010 winners, who received \$30, \$25, and \$20 Toys 'R' Us gift cards, had advice for next year's participants.

"If you have LEGOs, you can practice," says 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner Jacob Alvarado, a Santa Clara 3<sup>rd</sup> grader who built a hockey rink.

"Anyone who likes building should come and do it because it's a lot of fun even if you don't win," advises 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner Maya Varma, a Cupertino 6<sup>th</sup> grader who built a "green" skyscraper with solar panels.

Brooke Murphy-Dunning, a San Jose 6<sup>th</sup> grader, took 1<sup>st</sup> place with her oil miner and dump truck. "Try to build something unusual that hasn't been built and most people wouldn't think about everyday," she advises.

For information on this and other NAWIC educational programs, check [www.nawic.org](http://www.nawic.org) and [www.nawicsantaclara99.org](http://www.nawicsantaclara99.org). Krencik can be reached at [jkrencik@tcco.com](mailto:jkrencik@tcco.com) or 650/235-0377. The second year of Camp MAGIC (Mentoring A Girl in Construction), a free summer day camp for 15 to 20 high school girls, is planned for July.

To inspire the kids for the 2011 Block Kids Contest, consider a summer trip to LEGOLAND California in Carlsbad or, closer to home, to the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, a wartime boomtown.

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