

The Valdosta Daily Times

Our Opinion:

Power Tech: Expanding minds, borders

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— In "The World Is Flat," New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman writes how economy, technology and education have created a more level global playing field. By the world being flat, Friedman means nations are connected and interconnected via economics, corporations, communications networks, etc.

This week, in South Georgia, the world gets a little flatter. Valdosta Asian Cultural Association's past Asian Cultural Experience festival becomes the Azalea International. It continues its celebration of Asian customs but the festival has widened its focus to embrace cultures from around the world.

Azalea International has also added a new feature for young people: Power Tech — Youth Technology Creativity Contest. With Power Tech, youth teams are given kits and from those kits they must implement their imaginations and knowledge to create working models that are simple robots. Teams race their finished models for mobility and speed. They also use their models in tug-of-war competitions to gauge their powers. Each team is given the same kit. It is how they use their intellectual skills that make the difference. In demonstrating Power Tech to youngsters on field trips this week and then with an even more elaborate demonstration and participation scheduled for Saturday, Valdosta becomes the first location in the United States to host an official Taiwanese-sanctioned Power Tech event.

Last November, VACA and Georgia Power Foundation sponsored Lowndes High School teacher John Newton on a trip to Taiwan to observe and learn how to establish a Power Tech competition in Valdosta.

Of all of the Azalea International's many activities, event founder Serena Huang says she is most proud of Power Tech's introduction. "We hope this new addition will increase our middle-school students' knowledge of and creativity with technology, helping to prepare and motivate them to meet global opportunities in the future high-tech world," Newton said.

For Power Tech and the Azalea International, Serena Huang and VACA are to be

commended for more immediately connecting Valdosta-Lowndes County to the rest of the world and creating new possibilities for our local youth.

Azalea International:

The festival kicks off today and Friday with school field trips as well as other events Friday evening. The Power Tech demonstration is scheduled from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, along with other folk festival events at the James H. Rainwater Conference Center, off Norman Drive. For information: Visit the Web site at www.GAinternationalfolkfair.org

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