

**POLITICS**

Young Scientists Impress at the White House

By **MICHAEL D. SHEAR** MARCH 23, 2015

WASHINGTON — President Obama marveled on Monday as a group of 6-year-old Girl Scouts at the White House Science Fair demonstrated the automatic page turner they had built out of Legos and explained that the invention was the result of a brainstorming session.

“Have you ever had a brainstorming session yourself?” one of the young inventors asked the president.

He chuckled and responded quickly: “Health care.”

Mr. Obama honored the achievements of young scientists and inventors on Monday as he hosted the fifth annual science fair.

The president saw demonstrations of several of the projects, including one from a high school girl in Arizona who invented an algorithm to identify new Ebola drugs; one from a young man in New York with congenital scoliosis who created a spinal implant; and another from a freshman in Pennsylvania who devised a new method for securing computers against hackers.

“You’ve made a lot of people proud — your parents, your teachers, your friends, your mentors,” Mr. Obama told the children in an East Room ceremony. “And as president, I’m proud of you, because America is going to be stronger and smarter and healthier, and a much more interesting place because of you.”

The White House took the opportunity to announce \$240 million in new commitments from the government and private businesses to help children succeed in science, technology and math. Officials said that included a pledge of \$150 million from philanthropies intended to build a pipeline of young talent in the sciences.

But for Mr. Obama, it was clear that the best part of the day was spending time

with the young inventors. After singling out the high-powered projects, the president also mentioned the day's youngest scientists.

“They realized that some people who might be paralyzed or arthritic might have trouble turning pages on a book, so they invented this page turner,” Mr. Obama said. “It was awesome.”

As for his own brainstorming session, Mr. Obama admitted that health care did not have quite the fun factor as a Lego page turner.

“I didn't come up with something as cool as this,” he said.

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