

Keys student wants wind turbine named for comedian Stephen Colbert

Allen hopes comedian's name brings exposure

By SEAN KINNEY

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What do actor/comedian Stephen Colbert and students in Key West High School's alternative energy program have in common?

Well, nothing yet. But one student, Heindrek Allen, is working to garner national attention for the school's award-winning alternative energy curriculum.

He wants a wind turbine, soon to be under construction at the school, named after the host of Comedy Central's "Colbert Report."

"It just came to me one day," the 17-year-old senior told the *Keynoter*. "I just thought of it. Colbert is the only one with a show who will let anyone on who names something after him."

Back in March, NASA launched an online voting campaign to name a new room -- which includes a toilet -- on the International Space Station.

Colbert promoted himself as a write-in candidate on his nightly television show and ended up winning with more than 230,000 votes, beating the next-highest voter-getter, Tranquility, which was one of NASA's suggestions.

NASA didn't end up naming the room after Colbert -- it chose the name Serenity instead -- but it did name a \$5 million zero-gravity treadmill COLBERT, or Combined Operational Load-Bearing External Resistance Treadmill. It became operational just this month.

And in 2006, officials at the San Francisco Zoo asked for and received Colbert's blessing in naming an unhatched bald eagle after him. There's also Stephen Colbert's Americone Dream flavor from Ben and Jerry's ice cream.

Allen wants Key West High's wind turbine to join those ranks, and is circulating a petition among students and teachers that he hopes to present to the School Board for consideration.

"At least half the student body has signed," Allen said, "plus a lot of teachers and staff," including Principal John Walsh. He's topped 700 signatures.

Alternative Energy Center teacher Josh Clearman also signed the form. "I've always been a fan of Stephen Colbert," he said.

Allen said in addition to perhaps getting the school's program mentioned on national television, the ultimate goal is to attract grant funding to Key West High.

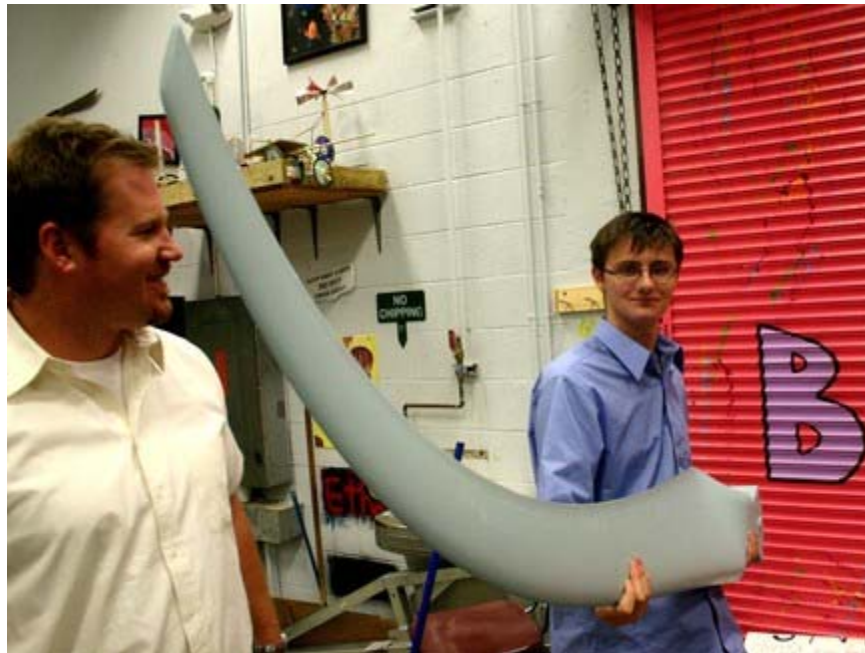
"When [Hewlett Packard] found out about us, they gave us a \$300,000 grant," he said, referencing a technology grant for laptop computers recently awarded to the school.

Allen said grants for solar-energy study, including solar panels, would be a tremendous boon to the program, although he may not be there to see it, as he's set to graduate in May.

He has no immediate plans but wants to study environmental engineering.

Colbert, meanwhile, is the winner of two prestigious Peabody Awards and three Emmys.

Comedy Central spokeswoman Renata Luczak couldn't be reached for comment.



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Teacher Josh Clearman (left) and 'Colbert' hopeful Heindrek Allen show one part of the turbine to be constructed.

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