

SEAC Young Member Group Hosts Gingerbread Bridge Competition

In late 2017, the Structural Engineers Association of Colorado's Young Member Group hosted a Gingerbread Bridge Competition for the fourth year in a row. While this competition started as a fun holiday activity for a company Christmas party in 2006, the event has slowly expanded to include several structural engineering firms in the greater Denver area. The SEAC YMG has made it their goal to increase involvement of student teams, ranging from middle school to college. This year's event had a surprising turn out, so much so that the YMG Committee is already starting to plan and look for larger venues for the 2018 event!

A total of 16 teams participated in the November competition: 3 middle school teams, 1 high school, 3 college, and 9 professional. The middle school teams were primed by Young Member Group volunteers that visited the schools to share "tips and tricks for design, construction and transportation of gingerbread bridges, and lessons previously learned during past Gingerbread Bridge Competitions." Along with looking toward the future of the next competition, the YMG Committee is also hoping to expand their outreach program to further spark a passion for structural engineering in middle school and high school students.

The competition begins with teams constructing their edible bridges, which they will later transport to the event venue. When teams arrive on competition day, they set up and prepare for judging. During this time, teams are able to walk around the room and network with one another, providing students the perfect opportunity to talk to members of the profession. Awards are given for the Architectural and People's Choice categories and the contestants strip their bridges of any non-structural elements before loading their bridges to failure. After all have been destroyed (and tasted for proof of edibility) the scores are tallied and the final winners are announced!

The event was made possible by corporate sponsorship; based on these generous sponsors, SEAC was able to waive the entry fee and provide stipends to 7 teams! And the charity doesn't end there; the winning teams' "prizes" were donations to a charity of their choice, the Children's Hospital and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

The 2017 Competition was featured on BEST Denver and can be viewed [here](#). The video features an inside look at how bridges are tested, measured, and designed!

For more about the competition, or how to get involved, visit the SEAC website or send an email to yeg.seac@gmail.com.