

Dakota Design Program Rides to first place at Autorama

By: [Alex Szwarc](#) | [Macomb Township Chronicle](#) | Published March 18, 2020



Students and alumni from the Dakota High School design technology program took first place in a couple of competitions at Autorama in February. Pictured are Lucas Costello, left, Noah Zielinski, Sean Chotkowski, Branden Sharrer, Luke Lapansi and Tony Ciranni. Missing from photo, Nathan Puma.

Photo provided by Scott Mitchell

MACOMB TOWNSHIP — A local design program did not disappoint at Autorama.

After a couple of long days and nights at the 68th annual Meguiar's Detroit Autorama in late February, students and alumni from the Dakota High School design technology program came home victorious in two custom categories — Custom High School Class and Pro Custom Motorcycle Trike Class.

Students entered the Scorpion three-wheeled vehicle into the competition.

“It was a total team effort, and I am truly proud of my students for all their hard work and dedication,” said Scott Mitchell, design technology instructor at Dakota. “Their enthusiasm and professionalism truly showed throughout the weekend’s event.”

This was the first year that the program was involved in Autorama.

The Scorpion has custom-designed floor grips created with computer-assisted design, or CAD, software. Laser cutters are used to create a template and guide.

"I teach design and engineering, so my advanced students in their fourth year and some graduating seniors sat down and had design meetings, coming up with a concept to design a motorcycle-powered three-wheeler, the Scorpion," Mitchell said.

The Scorpion was completely designed first on the computer, using CAD. Then, the design went to a fabrication lab used to build a product in-house.

Mitchell called it a multiyear project.

When he first contacted the chair of Autorama, it was suggested that Dakota's program only be in the high school class.

"I felt this was much more than just a high school project," Mitchell said. "I teach these guys to go above and beyond. Never keep it simple, which is why I think our program has been so successful."

The competition was graded by certified national judges.

"This is a very prestigious car show; one of the biggest indoor hot rod shows in America," Mitchell said. "They looked at every aspect of the vehicle; they scrutinized the welding, the fit, the finish, the quality of the work."

Students in the design program are involved in the concept phase, prototyping using a 3D printer, marketing and financing.