

UW-Stout: Packaging graduates take first, honorable mention in Ameristar competition

Posted on Monday, Jun 4, 2018

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Dissolvable detergent sheets, resealable cereal package ideas receive national recognition

Three University of Wisconsin packaging graduates took first place in the student design category of the 2018 Ameristar Package Awards competition.

Brandon Hokanson, of Sheboygan; Madeline Domke, of Minneapolis; and Trenton Ritsch, of Deerfield, teamed up to create a prototype new package for Wash-Pro dissolvable detergent sheets. Wash-Pro dissolvable laundry detergent.

Another UW-Stout team received an honorable mention for its resealable cereal package. Team members were Johnathon Kupsche, of Johnson Creek; Matthew Rhude, of Plymouth; and Kreg Ziarnik, of Chetek, all who also recently graduated. The package used an inner scored opening and tear notch and included resealable tape.

The competition is sponsored by the Institute of Packaging Professionals.

Domke, who is a packaging engineer at Ecolab in Eagan, Minn., said the idea for Wash-Pro came from the need to eliminate the risk of spills and messy dispensing in traditional liquid detergent bottles and to eliminate the need to store detergent on a horizontal surface.

“The package is also eco-friendly in many ways,” Domke said. “It is easily recyclable and extremely small and lightweight, which makes shipping it more efficient.”

One concern is that the product itself is water-soluble and could cause issues with distribution if it encounters wet or humid environments.

Ritsch, a packaging engineer with Radio Systems Corp. in Knoxville, Tenn., a leader in pet products such as feeders, fountains and toys, said the idea for Wash-Pro came from a couple of group brainstorming sessions.

"I think Wash-Pro is a good product because it's simple," Ritsch said. "It would be efficient in manufacturing, storage and consumer usage.

"I am very proud of receiving this award," Ritsch added. "I think we were all pretty surprised to find out we had won, especially after waiting months after submitting our entry in December."

Robert MeisnerIn fall 2017, Robert Meisner, packaging program director, assigned students in his Package Development course the task of designing a product or package they thought could use improvement.

"These detergent sheets are a great alternative to the messy bulk and weight of traditional detergent bottles," said Jim George, Institute of Packaging Professionals director of education when announcing the awards. "What a concept. No more messy spills during dispensing. No need to lift heavy detergent containers."

Meisner said the team's work was award-worthy. "It's a huge honor for the students and program to be recognized by the Institute of Packaging Professionals," Meisner said.

Domke wasn't expecting the award and said the team just wanted to do well on a class project.

The resealable cereal box took an idea and expanded it to a new product, helping to keep food fresh with a package that is easy to open and reclose, George said. Resealable cereal box

"This is a wonderful idea," George said, noting it only adds an extra two cents to the cost of packaging the cereal.

For more information on UW-Stout's packaging undergraduate program, go to www.uwstout.edu/programs/bsp/.