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Education

Empowering through education

By [Tara Bono](#) · May 9, 2013 · [Post a comment](#)

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There are few things more important to the Young Island writers than keeping our generation on Long Island. One, I'd imagine is having educated generations behind us to follow in our footsteps. Long Island's future leaders will be educated not only in business, medicine and law, but on the majors of their generation, and in fields specific to Long Island's needs. Long Island's institutions for higher learning recognize this and are responding to the demand for expanded science, technology, engineering and sustainability programs. The students in these fields will be the entrepreneurs and inventors to populate technology hubs around Long Island, design our critical infrastructures and advance our energy needs.

The company I work for, [EmPower Solar](#), has a long history of engaging students in these studies. EmPower was born a decade ago out of the [U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon](#) – a collegiate team competition that encourages energy innovation and sustainable building principals. The company has worked with colleges around Long Island and New York City in building solar decathlon homes since 2003. This year, the company isn't working directly on building a solar decathlon home, but will be present in California for the week-long Decathlon event – and is looking for four high school students to take along.



The NYIT 2007 Solar Decathlon House now has a home at the Town of Hempstead Energy Park

As community programs manager for EmPower, I am working to organize this year’s scholarship and decathlon competition. The 2013 EmPower Solar Student Competition challenges Long Island and New York City high school students to ask themselves: What are our region’s energy needs and how does energy from the sun fit into the mix?

Teams of two to four students are asked to submit answers through research based essays and creative video projects. This isn’t your average DBQ or Regents essay; students are encouraged to make their submissions exciting but also educational by using both STEM and creative components.

The project is fun and the stakes are high. In addition to joining EmPower executives at the Decathlon in California in October, EmPower is offering each team member a \$1,000 scholarship.

Sure, we’re hoping that students will utilize the scholarship at a local college, major in a STEM field, compete in the Decathlon themselves, and come work for EmPower one day, but we’ll leave that up to them. The ultimate goal of the competition is to spur student’s interest in energy issues, encourage them to think outside the box and share their innovative ideas with others through creative social media.

[Students can enter the competition by submitting the registration form by May 24. Project submissions are due in July.](#)

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