ITHACA -- A joint effort in this year's Sciencenter Egg Drop brought home a coveted prize for the Muka family: The title of "Most Artistic" among throngs of plummeting eggs.

"I really like science and building things, and he's good at artwork," said 11-year-old Nathan Muka, pointing to his father, Chris Muka. "So I thought, 'Why not put them together?'"

Sunday was the Sciencenter's 20th annual Egg Drop, a popular draw among science-minded children and families, as well as those who just like to see a good splat.

To enter, individuals or families built contraptions, restricted by rules such as maximum weight of 1.1 pounds, that protected a raw chicken egg from an eight-meter drop from the balcony of Center Ithaca. Entries were judged by age group.

This year's contest totalled 332 entries in morning and afternoon contests, according to Hester Vermaak, Sciencenter public relations manager.

Children cheered when Sciencenter officials announced Sunday's surprise emcee, Cornell University Rhodes professor and television personality, Bill Nye "The Science Guy." Nye proceeded to narrate each entry's owner and specially chosen name -- from "Unplugged" to "I Can't Believe I Ate the Whole Thing" -- before it made its fateful fall.

Four-year-old Peter Kirkpatrick, blue pants, holds out his hands ready to assist seven-year-old Jonathan Gomes-Selman as he reaches to catch "Lemon Drop," one of many egg-bearing entries during the Sciencenter's 20th Annual Egg Drop Sunday at Center Ithaca.
Only eggs that survived the fall were eligible for prizes in categories ranging from Most Artistic, Best Engineering and Design and Best Free Fall to Best Parachute/Slow Descent. But if your egg broke you still had a shot at Best Unsuccessful Effort -- the most satisfying "splat."

The Muka family’s entry, Gold Leaf, captured the "Most Artistic" prize among the family entries, thanks to its functional styrofoam encasing for the egg, adorned with golf spray-painted leaves attached to soft wires.

"The wires for the leaves were springy, so the wires bent," Chris Muka explained.

Nathan Muka, who attends Lansing Middle School, said his family has participated since he was little. Family members Chris, Nathan, Kelsey, 18, and Haleigh, 17, all had individual entries this year too.

"A few years ago I had a kite, and I got Best Engineering," Nathan Muka said.

There’s no end in sight for the family’s enthusiasm for egg-dropping, either.

"A lot of families come to this every year," Chris Muka said. "I wish they had this once a month."

Contact: aju@ithaca.gannett.com

Originally published Monday, April 4, 2005
Best Freefall: Corrie Green
Best Parachute: Ezra Davis and Robin Willford tied with Ji Eun Yi
Best Parachute category: one to Ezra David and Robin Willford and the other prize to Ji Eun Yi
Best in Age Group: Mia Smith
Best Unsuccessful Effort: Emmett Kotlikoff
Grade 6-11
Best Engineering Design: Brenhin Keller
Most Artistic: Josiah Boggs
Best Freefall: Bobby Eckert
Best Parachute: Kim Gasnett
Best in Age Group: Lily Katz and Larkin McSurely Bradshaw
Best Unsuccessful Effort: Hannah McKinney and Courtney Pollack
Grade 12-Adult
Best Engineering Design: Margaret Keller
Most Artistic: Raf Chew
Best Freefall: Carolyn McDaniel
Best Parachute: Pamela Willett
Best in Age Group: Raf Chew
Best Unsuccessful Effort: Paul Chew
Afternoon
Family Group
Best Engineering Design: Connel Family
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Winner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most Artistic: The Muka Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Freefall:</td>
<td>Brenner-Adams, Barnes and Barry Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Parachute:</td>
<td>Emily Mahr, Steve and Grandma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best in Age Group:</td>
<td>Saadia and Melissa Doak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Unsuccessful Effort:</td>
<td>Cook Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K - Grade 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Engineering Design:</td>
<td>Matthew Haefner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Artistic: Anna Baumgart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Freefall: Orian Gesslein</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Parachute: Alyson Hunt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best in Age Group: Erin Hilgartner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Unsuccessful Effort:</td>
<td>Laila Swingle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Engineering Design: Ben</td>
<td>Stewart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Artistic: Willow Keith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Freefall: Jay Hamilton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Parachute: Dylan Bland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best in Age Group: John Schafer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Unsuccessful Effort:</td>
<td>Noah Elman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Engineering Design:</td>
<td>Chrissy Gerding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Artistic: Tim Haefner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Freefall: Eva Landsberg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Parachute: Mike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodenschatz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best in Age Group: Dianne Vernon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Unsuccessful Effort: David Friedman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Engineering Design: Nathan Brown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Artistic: Brett Kash and Steven Nemeth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Freefall: Paul Westin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Parachute: Jocelyn Sawyer and Sonia Dvorak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best in Age Group: Dylan Keith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Unsuccessful Effort: Fenna Spaak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12-Adult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Engineering Design: Vito Bitetto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Artistic: Kelsey Muka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Freefall: Betsy Rudolph</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Parachute: Mary Weiss-Andersson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best in Age Group: Vito Bitetto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Unsuccessful Effort: Will Metro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>