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Science Programs Encourage Students & Recent Headlines, etc., etc.

Hawaii Public Radio recently broadcast a news story about a Colorado high school student, Ryan Patterson, who won a \$100,000 scholarship for his invention: a gold glove with ten finger sensors, a 9-volt battery and a small display screen, to translate sign language into printed text. Many other inventors have tried to produce a glove that could transmit sign language, but it took an 18 year old to develop a workable model, a very significant aid for the deaf. Ryan will be going to Sweden to see the Nobel Prize awards and, according to Alex Chadwick the National Public Radio interviewer, will compare the medal he won in the Siemens Westinghouse Science and Technology Competition with the Nobel Laureate's medals.

On the same day I heard about this remarkable young man, I read with interest a letter to the editor of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin by Ed Cadman MD, Dean of the John A. Burns School of Medicine and President of the Hawaii Academy of Science. With permission of the Star-Bulletin and Dr. Cadman we reprint it here for our readers.

Recent headlines in the local newspapers (Star-Bulletin, Nov. 20, Advertiser, Nov. 21) on Hawaii's public school students dismal performance on the National Assessment on Educational Progress (NAEP), a national science test, is a wake-up call to everyone involved in science to do what we can to find a lasting solution to this major problem. Forty-nine percent of fourth graders and 60 percent of eighth graders scored below the basic skill levels.

The Hawaii Academy of Science, in partnership with the Department of Education and the College of Education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, sponsors two outstanding science education programs: the Hawaii State Science and Engineering Fair and the Pacific Symposium for Science and Sustainability.

The science fair program encourages hands-on scientific inquiry from concept to finish. All students in grades 6-12 are encouraged to participate. Each year, around 6,000 students in Hawaii conduct a scientific experiment, summarize the results on a display board and compete in the school science fair. The better projects advance to district science fairs, and finally about 350 students are selected to compete at the state science fair. About 200 scien-

tists judge the projects and provided feedback to the students. About 100 organizations provide awards for the Fair. As one student put it, "Participating in the science fair taught me many lessons that could never be taught in the classroom." Another student said, "The science fair program motivated me to reach for the stars." The State Science Fair is a Collaborative effort of the educational, Scientific and business communities throughout the state.

The Pacific Symposium is patterned after professional conferences and includes social events and fieldtrips together with the presentation of papers. This weekend long event, which will be held February 8-10 next year, is free of charge for all students whose papers are selected for presentation. This program is funded by a grant from the Department of Defense.

The main goal of both these programs is to get students interested in science by doing science. Hawaii students are fortunate that programs like these are available to them. They are also fortunate that many science teachers appreciate and understand the value of these programs and choose to participate.

Hawaii Academy of Science is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote scientific research and science education and to encourage scientific inquiry by Hawaii's secondary school students.¹

References

1. Letters to the editor, Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Dec 3, 2001, p. A10



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