

How Shy Nun Taught 17 Science Prizewinners



WHOEVER WOULD BELIEVE that science could be fun? But Anne Pawlak (right), Ladywood High School sophomore, enjoys science so much that she spent her whole summer working with fruit flies under the direction of Sr. Mary Bonavita—and it paid off when her science project took a grand award in the Science and Engineering Fair. (Observer photo by Bob Wooding)

By KATHY MORAN

A shy, modest nun was the guide behind the 17 Ladywood High School students who virtually monopolized the awards at the recent annual Science and Engineering Fair.

Sister Mary Bonavita, a Felician sister, was the advisor to all the prize winners but claims little of the credit.

"In most cases, the girls came up with their own ideas, but in some cases I helped them along," the chemistry teacher said.

"EVERY YEAR we have a science fair in the school, and the girls decide if they want to enter their projects in further competition.

"Usually when they see their project next to the others, they decide whether it is worth further competition. It's pretty much their decision," she said.

Sr. Bonavita has been teaching biology and chemistry for "30-plus" years, but this is the first year her students have hauled in so many awards.

"This was quite a windfall," she said.

The girls received 17 of the 32 awards or about 53%, in the ninth through 12th grade competition for students from western Wayne County. Divine Child High School took eight awards and the rest went to scattered schools.

Since Sr. Bonavita joined the Ladywood staff five years ago, the number of prize winners has increased, but this year they jumped from the 10 awards in 1965-70 to the 17 winners plus a blue ribbon winner this year. The all-girl school had entered 24 projects.

THE LADYWOOD girls took all the prizes in the biochemistry division including a grand prize winner, sophomore Anne M. Pawlak of Detroit.

The bubbling Miss Pawlak acted on a tip from her teacher and ended up with a grand prize project and a free trip to the International Science Fair in Kansas City, Mo. in May.

"She wanted to do a project on eyes. But because of the difficulty of getting animal or human specimens, I suggested she use insects," Sr. Bonavita said.

"I wanted to do something with eyes because I've had trouble with my eyes due to a birth injury," Miss Pawlak said.

She sorted through a ton of information that Sr. Bonavita gave her and came across an idea on the eye colors of fruit flies.

"I WORKED on it since last June and spent about three days a week from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Ladywood in the summer," she said. "That way I just had to organize it after school this year and had more time for extra activities."

"I spent my summer with fruit flies," she said.

Her project, officially called "Separation and Genetic Crosses of Eye Color in *Drosophila*," was one of the winners in the biochemistry division.

THE OTHER prize winners and their projects in biochemistry are:

Janis Gruska, 16, of Dearborn, "An Analysis of Bacterial Cell Walls Through Paper Chromatography;"

Anne Diederich, 17, of Dearborn Heights, "Effect of a Magnetic Field and UV Radiation on Enzyme Activity;"

Dianne C. Doria, 17, of 14415 Summerside Court, Livonia, "The Non-Hemoglobin Erythrocyte Proteins in Different Blood Types;"

Jean M. Hoey, 16, of 16255 Country Club Drive, Livonia, took first place for her project "The Comparison of Pascal's Triangle and Its Three Dimensional Expansion" in the mathematics category.

Ladywood winners from the earth and space sciences are:

Catherine Bammel, 17, of Dearborn Heights, "Effect of Plant Hormones Under Varying Wave Lengths of Light on Phaseolus Vulgaris Disks;"

Mary Repar, 18, of 3845 Ann Arbor Trail, Livonia, "The Effect of Temperature on the Growth of the 'Pregnant Plant';"

and Rebecca Bessner, 16, of Dearborn Heights, "Effects of Vitamins on Agricultural Products."

Sheila Owsiany, 17, of 9023 San Jose, Redford Township, took second place for "Effect of Cyclamate on the Sensitivity of Bacteria to Antibiotics" in the medicine and health category.

MICROBIOLOGY winners are:

Lynette Majur, 17, of Dearborn Heights, "A Study of the Biodegradation of Detergents by 'Euglena Viridis';"

and Kathleen Murray, 15, of 15901 Gary Lane, Livonia, "A Microbiological Study of the Effectiveness of Fluoride vs. Non-Fluoride Toothpaste."

A special award was given to Christina Doria, 16, of 14415 Summerside Court, Livonia for her engineering project on "Iron Oxide: Is it Really a Waste?"

Chemistry award winners are Suzanne Dzierwa, 17, of Dearborn Heights, "A Magnetic Method for Determining the Composition of Mixed Crystals;"

and Mary Skiba, 17, of 13550 Sarasota, Redford Township, "Effect of Diameter and Concentration of Rhythmic Banding in Silicic Acid."

Charlene Prokos, 17, of Detroit, took first place under behavioral and social sciences for her project, "Does Luck Influence ESP Scores?"

The two freshman winners are: Laurel Krych, 14, of 5285 Woodring, Livonia, "The Effects of Drugs and Chemicals on the Rate of Heartbeat of Daphnia;"

and Mary Kernohan, 14, of 9826 Melrose, Livonia, "The Effect of Amino Acids on the Regeneration of Planaria."

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