

Blinded by science

Local student shines in national talent search

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

You could say Heather Shenkman is blinded by science. Her tunnel vision, though, merely stems from a love of the subject.

The Farmington Hills resident and senior at Detroit Country Day was selected as one of 300 semifinalists in the nationwide Westinghouse Science Talent Search. She was chosen out of 1,662 high school students.

Her project went beyond the usual dissection-of-frogs variety. Shenkman donned a lab coat and joined Dr. Linda Fisher, a molecular virologist at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. Together, they researched whether the Measles M Gene could be found in a laboratory bacteria replicating DNA.

Shenkman took samples, isolated the DNA and used a gel to find the M gene.

Of 21 samples, she found five had the gene. Such research could lead to a better measles vaccine.

"She was on par with many of the undergraduate students," Fisher said. "In fact, she was better than some of them."

"It's exciting," Shenkman said. "You're learning something in the classroom and then actually going to the lab and working with a professor."

Shenkman's no neophyte when it comes to science projects.

She's entered the Metropolitan Detroit Science and Engineering Fair every year since the seventh grade, winning first place in both the ninth- and 10th-grade category.

While others her age were building windmills, Shenkman conducted a two-year study of 400 kindergartners.

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effects of non-sexist roles on kindergarten children's perception of occupational sex roles. She had one group read a book, "Girls Can Be Anything"; another group didn't.

She then had all 400 pupils surveyed draw a picture of people in different jobs.

"Of those who read the book, some females drew women as doctors," she said. "Even some of the boys drew female doctors."

She reminisces about her first science project. In the fifth grade, she investigated how diet affects the growth of fish, feeding four dry food and the others brine. She found the fish who ate the live food grew faster.

"Back then, that was exciting," Shenkman said.

Rest assured, though, being chosen as a semifinalist in a prestigious competition is more exciting. She hopes the Westinghouse award gives her an edge in future academic pursuits.

She's applied for the Inteflex program at the University of Michigan, an integrated premedical/medical program.

She's not sure what area of specialty she will pursue, debat-

ing between pediatrics and cardiology.

"I guess I'll have time to think about it," she said.

Apparently, Shenkman is good about thinking of other things. In addition to her science savvy, she's proficient in math and Latin.

Shenkman scored in the top 100 in last year's Michigan Mathematics Prize Competition. Also, she is a committee member for the state executive board of the Michigan Junior Classical League, a statewide organization of students of Latin language.

She's not all pens and pencils, though, serving as a volunteer at Botsford Hospital and being a member of DCD's cheerleading squad.

How does she do it?

For one, Shenkman manages her time well. So well, she even finds time to watch TV.

"Sometimes, too much," she said.

Her favorite show, not surprisingly, is Fox-TV's "Class of '96," which depicts the first year of college.

"It gives me an idea of what to expect," she said.



STAFF PHOTOS BY SHARON LENTZOW

Making a science of it: Heather Shenkman is one of 300 semifinalists in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search.

Animal complaints rise; crime reports hold steady

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Except for a few yardward varmits, Farmington hasn't experienced a significant rise in crime.

That's the good news in an extensive operations report compiled by the Farmington Public Safety Department for 1992. One of the biggest jumps was in the number of animal complaints — 191 in 1992 compared to 119 the previous year, a 60-percent increase.

Public Safety Director Gary Goss attributes part of the critter problem to a growing raccoon population. Otherwise, he's happy with the results.

"Farmington is a stable community," said Goss, who was officially appointed director March 15. "The residents and people who work here are community-minded. It's a good place to live and work."

The number of part I crimes — murder, criminal sexual conduct, arson, assaults, larceny, car theft, robbery and burglary — remained relatively the same in 1992.

There were 468 part I crimes reported in '92 compared to 453 in '91. The bulk of those, 359, were larcenies. The 10-year statistical average of part I crimes is 501.

No murders took place last year. In fact, the last reported murder in Farmington occurred in 1981.

Six cases of criminal sexual conduct were reported, two more than in '91. There were four robberies, one involving a weapon. Two arson cases were reported, compared to three in '91.

Farmington is a stable community.

Gary Goss
public safety director

The number of car thefts was 18, which is down from the 10-year average of 31.

Assaults did jump from two in '91 to 13 in '92. Goss said those numbers may be misleading, though.

Of 12 serious or felonious assault cases, only four involved physical contact and one person was hospitalized. Three involved the threatened use of a gun, four were the result of traffic altercations and two were domestic.

Burglaries increased slightly from 47 in '91 to 51 in '92. Eight of those involved unlawful entry while forced entries declined from 40 to 38. Attempts were also down.

Burglaries have been on a rapid decline since 1983, when there were 142 reported.

The decrease coincides with an increase in the number of blocks participating in Neighborhood Watch. Residents on 108 blocks are involved in the program, compared to two in 1983.

Shoplifting increased. There were 97 reported cases in 1992 compared to 77 in '91. A&P reported 18 more incidents; Farmer Jack, 23.

"We attribute part of that to the fact they have brought in their own security," Goss said.

The number of part II offenses, which represent those outside of

Part I crimes, was down overall. Increases included check offenses (11 in '91 to 16 in '92), vandalism (1.7-percent rise), driving under the influence (up 5.1 percent), public nuisance (up 40.5 percent), and liquor law violations (up 22 percent).

Drug violations also increased, from 13 to 25 cases in '92; a majority of those involved marijuana.

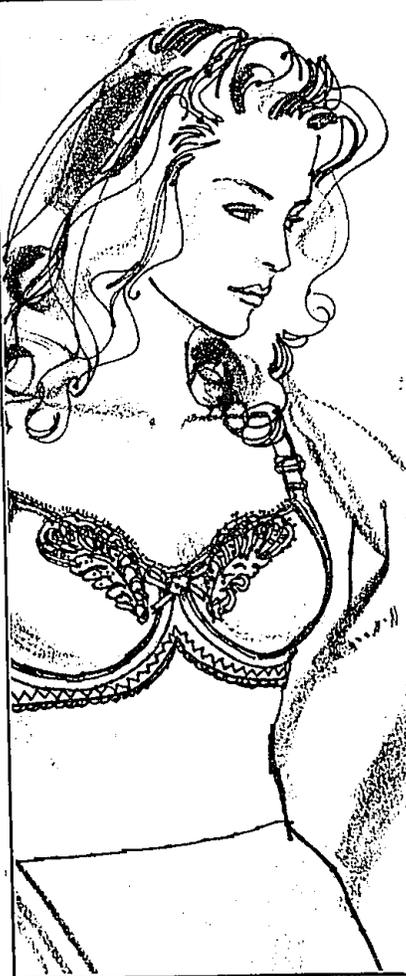
Goss said marijuana could be more prevalent in the area, or "Officers might be more attuned to what to look for" and are catching violators.

Decreases included weapon violations (11 in '91 to six in '92), indecent exposure (four in '92, down from nine the previous year) and child offenses (down from six to three in '92).

Also down 14 percent was the number of misdemeanor assault and battery cases.

"There's a lot of attention at the high school... Perspective is what we're talking about here," said Goss, referring to the outcry over reported fighting incidents involving students. "I'm not saying it's not a concern. Any assault is serious. I don't see an increase."

However, the number of juveniles arrested for committing part II offenses increased significantly. Some 72 juveniles were arrested in 1992 compared to 26 in 1991. The reason according to Goss is stepped up patrols around Farmington High, where students have been ticketed for tobacco possession and loitering, and also because of an increase in liquor violation tickets.



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Farmington residents to see slight changes to recycling cost

Farmington residents will find it easier and cheaper to pay for recycling.

The city treasurer's office will handle the billing, taking over from Resource Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County. Instead of being billed twice a year, residents will have a one-

time fee tagged onto the summer tax bill.

With one less billing, rates will be reduced to \$59 residential and \$45 for condominiums. The previous fee was \$61 residential, \$47 condominiums, a savings of \$2.

"There's some tradeoffs," said city clerk Patsy Cantrell. "They'll be paying earlier, but the late fees

will be reduced... and will be a couple less stamps."

The late fee under the current billing plan is 10 percent. On the tax roll, the fee for delinquent tax payments is 4 percent.

The Farmington City Council approved the change at its March 15 meeting.

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