



Dr. Nelson Ying congratulates Josh Vekhter, left, of Williamsville East and Jimmitti Teysir of City Honors at the International Science and Engineering Fair in Reno, Nev.

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2 local students soar at international event

By Jay Rey *NEWS STAFF REPORTER*

Two local high school students earned recognition among 1,500 top young scholars from around the world at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair last week in Reno, Nev.

Jimmitti Teysir, a junior at City Honors School, earned a college scholarship from the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia worth \$6,000 to \$9,000 a year.

Josh Vekhter, a senior at Williamsville East High School, received a \$1,000 gift from the American Mathematical Society, as well as \$500 for taking fourth place in the math competition.

The two were also among 14 students named Ying Scholars by philanthropist Dr. Nelson Ying. Each received a \$1,000 scholarship.

The Nevada event isn't your run-of-the-mill science fair, and Jimmitti and Josh aren't your average students.

Through the City Honor's science research program, Jimmitti has been working with researchers at Hauptman Woodward Research Institute and Roswell Park Cancer Institute studying the genes of bacteria in an effort to fight cancer.

Jimmitti's science project — "The Genetic Code in *Anaeromyxobacter dehalogenans* (Adhal)" — began with her intensive study of the literature and computer coding of genes.

Meanwhile, Josh's project — "Graph Crossings and Cyclic Permutations: Towards a Proof of Zarankiewicz's Conjecture" — began with his yearlong effort to understand a concept that was mentioned at a summer math camp he attended.

He has been studying independently with advisers from Buffalo State College and Yale University. Josh is headed to Cornell University in the fall.

Jimmitti, 17, and Josh, 18, competed in March at the Tri Region Science and Engineering Fair in Syracuse.

The two were named the grand award winners among 45 other students from 27 upstate counties and chosen to compete in last week's international fair, where hundreds of prizes and scholarships were handed out to the 1,500-plus competitors from more than 50 countries.

Mary Eileen Wood, director of the regional science fair in Syracuse, said she was "obnoxiously proud" of the two.

"They are spectacular," Wood said by phone from Reno on Friday. "I can't imagine bringing two students that better represented the potential of the young people in our 27 counties."

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