

High School Astronomer Wins First Place in 1999 Connecticut Science Talent Search

Glastonbury High School senior Mary A. Dombroski's research project on "Cataclysmic Stellar Variability with Eclipsing Binary Superimposition" won first place in the 1999 Connecticut Science Talent Search. Dr. Anthony J. DeMaria, president of the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering, announced the results of the statewide contest at the annual meeting of the Academy in New Haven on June 3rd.

Research projects by Nitya Abraham from Stamford High School, Michael Lombardi from Plainfield High School, and Neil Snyder from Brunswick School in Greenwich were selected for Honorable Mention by the Academy in the local science talent search.

The 1999 Connecticut contest is part of the 58th National Science Talent Search sponsored by the world's largest chipmaker, Intel Corporation. Earlier this year, Ms. Dombrowski was awarded a \$3000 scholarship and attended the Science Talent Institute in Washington, DC, as one of the finalists in the national competition. It was conducted under the auspices of Science Service, publisher of the weekly *Science News*.

The national contest is America's oldest and most highly regarded science competition for high school seniors. Intended to stimulate student interest in science, math and technology, it has recognized some 3,000 finalists with \$3.7 million in scholarships during the past six decades. Alumni include two Nobel Laureates, three National Medal of Science winners, and more than two dozen members of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences.

Ms. Dombroski's research project analyzed the fluctuations in brightness of IP Pegasi, (thought to be a primary white dwarf) resulting from the sporadic transfer of matter between the components of that star system. She has already won top honors in national and international competition among young astronomers and her research has been published in professional journals. With aspirations to be a NASA Mission Specialist on the international space station, Ms Dombrowski plans to pursue her college studies at Georgetown or, alternatively at Yale or Columbia. Her research interests include microgravity and the biological effects of extended missions in space.

In announcing the results of the Connecticut Science Talent Search, Academy president DeMaria congratulated Ms. Dombroski, the other contestants and their parents and teachers. He remarked that "The results of this contest demonstrate the capabilities of Connecticut schools to prepare graduates for world-class careers in science and technology. This achievement is a good omen for the future of Connecticut in an era when science-based technology is an increasingly powerful driver of economic growth and social development. These human resources are Connecticut's investment in the future."

