

# Area News



Kathleen O'Rourke/Staff photos

Daniel Fortin, 17, a senior at Stamford High School, explains his science project, 'Effects of Room Acoustics on Generated Sound of Percussion,' to judge Prof. Joseph Hajla of the physics department at Norwalk Community College during the Norwalk Community College Science Fair. Fortin won second prize for his project.

## Students bring array of ideas to science fair

By Asante Green

Staff Writer

NORWALK — Though Jeffrey Phan doesn't plan to become a scientist, the Stamford High School senior won first place yesterday at the regional science fair at Norwalk Community College.

Phan, who has been working with a local dermatologist, hopes the findings from his experiment, "Automated Analysis of Melanoma Through Machine Vision," lead to more research on skin cancer.

"I've been working on a machine that will ultimately detect melanoma," Phan said. "It is an enhancement of an idea created by a local dermatologist. It's like a big closet that you walk into and get a picture taken."

The idea, Phan said, is to give the computer a better image to identify melanoma more clearly.

"You're basically dealing with visual optimization. The previous machines weren't taking the greatest pictures," he said.

The science fair, part of NCC's all-day Academic Festival 2003, featured 62 science

experiments from students from seven high schools, including Westhill in Stamford and Brien McMahon in Norwalk.

Projects examined an array of subjects, such as Westhill student Michael Borano's study of caffeine's effects on frog behavior, or Brien McMahon's Michael Papale and Philip McMahon's look at the effects of salt on fecal coliform levels in the Silvermine section of Norwalk.

All entries used elements of advanced chemistry, biology, biochemistry, physics, engineering and computer science.

"These are some very bright young people," said Harry Rymer, an NCC physics professor and one of 24 contest judges. "We're deeply interested in what they do intellectually in their approaches. It gives lie to the statement that the younger generation will fail."

Daniel Fortin, a Stamford High senior, won second prize for his project showing that hearing can be damaged at a higher rate in the school gym



Sara Schneider, 16, a junior at Westhill, discusses her project, 'Harry Potter: The Magic of Physics' with John Dolhun, a judge and chemistry professor at the college.

than in the band room.

"Using a percussion instrument, I tested two areas of the school, the school gym and the band room, to determine their reverb levels," said Fortin, whose project examined "Effects of Room Acoustics on Generated Sound of Percussion." "In the gym, the levels greatly exceeded those in the band room. Because of materials in the room more of the sound bounces back at you."

An experiment to determine whether a calcium-enriched diet increases weight loss in mice produced an unanticipated

result for Westhill junior Lea Simon.

Lea discovered the male mice in the study didn't like dieting as much as the female mice.

"The male mice became territorial and cannibalistic," she said.

Lea, who took home an honorable mention, said she knows what she'll do differently next year.

"From my data I could not prove my hypothesis that calcium in a diet increases weight loss," Simon said. "I've learned that most scientists who do this

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## Science

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experiment use overweight mice, and they separate them.

Jennifer Wood, co-chairwoman of the Academic Festival said the festival, which included various speakers, performances and films, was created to celebrate academics. The day con-

cluded with a talk of presidents in times of crisis by renowned historian Michael Beschloss.

"This day is really to celebrate the students who attend NCC and generations of learning," Wood said. "We tied the high school student in to our celebration because many of them may be future students."