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A Three Time ISEF Winner Reflects on Involvement in Science Fair Program

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Besides the thrill of competition in science fairs, most of my students have commented that they have met some "really neat" people that I am sure will leave a lasting impression on them. I am sure that many life-long friendships have sprung up during science fairs.

Science fair competition can be a thrill and learning experience for all involved; the student, the parents, the teacher, the school and the community. As a teacher that has been involved in science competition for years, I am fully convinced that the values gained through science fairs far outweigh any negative results.

*E. WILLIAM ANDERSON is a biology instructor at Westonka High School, Mound, Minnesota

A Three Time ISEF Winner Reflects on Involvement in Science Fair Program.

LINDA McDONALD*

If I were asked to sum up seven years of science fair participation into one word, I would say "GROWTH". Growth is a word which encompasses many facets of the science fair program; the growth of knowledge, the growth of personality, the growth of friendship, and the growth of experience.

Researching a science fair project, developing experimental techniques, and learning by trial and error, all provide growth of knowledge not achieved through reading science textbooks. The growth of knowledge may develop over a period of years as a project becomes more and more sophisticated with continued research and new or refined investigative methods, or may develop as a result of further researching information provided by previous researchers.

An overwhelming sense of growth experienced through science fair participation is personal growth. A seasoned participant experiences joy and success as well as disappointment and defeat. Growth is attained through a feeling of personal satisfaction and achievement. There's a good feeling in creating a project and seeing it through whether the project results in a blue ribbon or not. There is the good feeling in presenting a project that you alone were frustrated about, that you alone thought would never materialize.

Growth is also achieved by sharing similar feelings and experiences with other science fair participants and by creating strong bonds of friendship. Through international science fair competition, there is the opportunity to meet other students and teachers from all fifty states and several foreign countries. The sharing of thoughts and culture is an experience unlike any other. Through the science fair program, I have experienced all these facets of growth. Many of my fondest memories stem from past science fairs attended. I am grateful and proud to have been a participant.

*LINDA McDONALD, a graduate of Mounds View High School in suburban Saint Paul, is currently attending the University of Minnesota and working toward a B.S. degree in biochemistry. Linda participated in several science fairs including the 26th, 27th and 28th International Science and Engineering Fairs winning numerous awards.

A Parents Point of View

LEONARD & JOANNE RABATIN*

Science Fairs are exciting and stimulating events! Our sons have participated at the Local, Regional, State and International levels. They have learned many things. Primarily, they have learned their project subject area well. They talked to librarians, researchers, teachers and business people looking for information. They have learned to practice good scientific methods in their work as they prove and verify their results.

The presentation of their material has stimulated the boys' display and artistic abilities. They have experienced the importance of clarity and credibility as they speak before the judges and visitors.

We believe that science fair participation has helped our students do better work in their daily school classes. They are more confident and open to learning after being stimulated by peers and judges.

We, as parents, have benefited from science fairs also. We have learned from our children. *They* are the experts! Helping them cope with the preparation and excitement as the fair approaches certainly develops our patience. Finally, we have been rewarded with the pride and warmth that comes to a parent when their child completes a project and achieves the prize and recognition.

*LEONARD & JOANNE RABATIN are parents of six children. Three of the children have participated in regional and state science fairs. Their oldest son Joe was one of sixteen Minnesota students attending the International Science Fair in Cleveland last year.