

Greetings to our friends with the Connecticut Science Fair and Science Horizons,



It is once again a pleasure to report our adventures to you. The experience in Indianapolis at the **International Science and Engineering Fair** has been amazing. Friday is a day of awards ceremonies and breakdown of projects. Here's a bit of what happened:

The morning began with breakfast with everyone dressed in their professional attire. We headed to the convention center to the grand stage. If you haven't seen pictures of this amazing site, be sure to visit the CSF website where it is all documented:

http://members.cox.net/ct_isef/ISEF2006.shtml

The best part is to see the students up on the giant jumbotron – as they walk to the stage.

The morning's award ceremony consisted of government awards. We are proud to report that Alex Capecelatro won the Army's award of three \$1000 bonds. He proudly walked to the stage to receive his award.



We got together at the Hilton for a lunch. The students, spearheaded by Pratistha, continued their tradition of finding out how good the spinach and artichoke dip was. Some visitors recognized Jonathan and chatted with him for a bit. We then returned to the convention center for the grand awards.

It might be fair to say that the Grand Awards Ceremony is like the academy awards for high school science students and the fanfare is there! The cameras are on – the lightshow is present – the screens are flashing – the announcer's voice is bold – and there is an excitement in the air second to none. Each of the 14 categories presents 4th, 3rd, 2nd, 1st, and overall category winner. All of the fourth place awards are announced – nothing yet. Third place awards are announced – Alex wins in Engineering. Second place announced – Pratistha wins in Botany, and Jason and Jonathan place in Medicine and Health. Ironically they all end up together on stage – it was great for pictures! Be sure to see all of the awards details at

http://members.cox.net/ct_isef/Awards.html

After the awards ceremony, we headed back to the hotel for congratulations and camaraderie. Our next step was to head back to the convention center for project breakdown. Along the way, we grabbed a few mementos from the experience to pack in our boxes. Students had the opportunity to say their goodbyes to some of their new friends. We all headed out for some pizza to cap off the day. Back at the hotel, while some of us “slow packers” were busy trying to fill our suitcases, we were treated to a fireworks display out the hotel window. We heard that it was at one of the ballparks.



As I conclude for today, I must let you know, personally, this has been a wonderful experience for me. Although I attended the ISEF previously, this was my first opportunity to bring a student. As usual, I have asked a student to write about some event or impressions they have

had. I have specifically left the task for the students very open-ended, and have been extremely pleased with the eclectic writing they have provided. I, in fact, have enjoyed each surprise as the students provide me with their writing. Today my student, Drew, will share an impression with you. It was truly a humbling and honoring experience to read what he wrote.

Drew's project, "Comparing Salt Marshes On The Long Island Sound Using Health Indices In *Fundulus heteroclitus*," was in the Environmental Sciences category.

On the first day of high school, I walked into my biology class with an open mind about life. I was a little fish in a big pond. Little did I know that the man who called my name for attendance that day would shape my life forever.

Mr. LaBanca, taught me that year the study of organisms, environmental sciences, how animals live. Later down the road, Mr. LaBanca would teach me more about life than I could learn in any classroom. Regardless of the aimless thoughts running through my head, he saw the potential in me and focused my talents into what they are today.

When junior year rolled around, I was still as open minded as ever, and equally as blissfully ignorant. I walked into the first Applied Science Research class not knowing what to expect, and not knowing what the future would hold in store for me. Again, Mr. LaBanca was there to channel my thoughts onto one project.

Things started off slow, doing research and getting ideas. But ever time I hit a dead end or was ready to give up, Mr. LaBanca redirected my thoughts or pointed out something that I had not seen. Here in lies the sign of an inspirational teacher, one who keeps his students motivated no matter what obstacles they encounter. Throughout the year, I slowly worked my project bit by bit, often being late to my next class. Spring rolled around and the fairs began to loom closer.

The first science fair was Junior Science Humanities Symposium, where I was presenting my poster. The Sunday before the fair, I brought my poster to Mr. LaBanca's house at 10:15 p.m., where grinning he told me that I had a lot of work to do on it. Needless to say it was a long night, one well worth it though because I won the poster section there.

Next was Science Horizons, where after school Mr. LaBanca and I were frantically running around trying to finish my testing literally minutes before we had to leave. However, the work again was well worth it, because I won the overall best poster presentation and a trip to not only the Connecticut Science Fair, but also the International Science fair that I and now writing this from. As much as I was beaming receiving that award, I know that Mr. LaBanca was equally as proud.

So here we are, a few years after I took my first steps into high school not knowing anything about my future. I have found something that I love, something that I can pursue in college and later in my life. So not only is this my newsletter, but it is also my letter of gratitude. Not only has Mr. LaBanca been my teacher, but he has also been a role model and a friend. From going into school on Saturday mornings, or taking his daughters on a trip to go see Dr. Kaplan, Mr. LaBanca has always been there for me. And sure enough, when I thought seeing him all week, and on Saturdays was enough, I would see the familiar face holding one of his girls in church on Sunday. Indeed, Mr. LaBanca has affected my life in ways that I will not be apparent to me for a long time.

Although I did not win anything at ISEF, it gave me a glimpse of the true opportunities available to me. I am happy to say that I will be back in Mr. LaBanca's class next year, although I will already have my mind set and a goal that I would like to achieve.

Furthermore, I'd like to say congratulations to Jason, Jon, Pratistha, and Alex, who all third and second places in their respective categories. Congrats on your accomplishments, for your awards were well deserved. I wish the best of luck to Jon, Pratistha, and Alex, who are going off to college in a few months. I would also like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Muller, Mr. Wisner, and J.P., for making all of this possible. Without them I would not be in Indianapolis today. But this is just the beginning of my journey, and I am awaiting the future with a focused mind and an open heart.

God Bless,
Drew Taylor

I hope you have enjoyed these messages, and please know that we appreciate your support. It has been my distinct pleasure to write for you. I would love to hear from you; please feel free to email me at franklabanca@sbcglobal.net

Warmest regards,

Frank LaBanca

Newtown High School Science Department