

## REGENERON CONTEST

# LI's young scholars

## 58 HS students win 1st-round prizes in science contest

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Jericho High School ranked at the top nationally yesterday in the country's oldest student research competition, and Long Island as a region produced a total of 58 first-round prizewinners.

Students are vying for double the money this year in the renamed Regeneron Science Talent Search. The contest, founded in 1942, formerly was funded by Intel, the California-based computer-chip manufacturer, and before that by Westinghouse Corp.

The new sponsor, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc., based in Westchester County, has boosted the competition's annual awards to \$3.1 million, including a \$250,000 top prize. First-round winners, known as scholars, get \$2,000 each with a matching amount for their schools.

The number of first-round winners from Nassau and Suffolk counties in the 2017 competition is up from last year's 44 — an increase of more than 30 percent. It is the Island's best showing since 2012, with nearly one-fifth of the 300 regional winners named nationwide.

Jericho High School, a perennial contender, produced nine scholars — one of only three schools in the country to achieve that number. The other two are Montgomery Blair High School, a public school in Silver Spring, Maryland, and The Harker School, a private academy in San Jose, California.

The Bronx High School of Science, an academic powerhouse for more than 70 years, ranked fourth in the contest, with seven scholars.



Nine Jericho High School seniors were named first-round winners. ■ Video: [newsday.com/education](http://newsday.com/education)

At Jericho High, students hugged each other yesterday morning as they saw their names pop up on a competition website. Elation grew as students and teachers returned to their laptops to check on results for other schools across the nation.

"Our school is just extraordinary," said Grace Hu, 17, one of the scholars. Her project, conducted largely at Stony Brook University, centered on the use of ultratiny nanoparticles in treating cancerous tumors.

"Mind-blowing!" said Serena McCalla, the district's coordinator of science research, who holds a doctoral degree with a concentration in genetics and photosynthesis. "It's pretty amazing that we stand out among the best and the brightest in the nation when we're a small public high school with one science re-

search teacher."

Jericho High enrolls 1,096 students in grades nine through 12; Bronx Science has more than 3,000.

In addition to Jericho, the Great Neck district produced seven scholars, Port Washington, six, and Herricks, five. The Bellmore-Merrick, Smithtown, Syosset and Three Village districts had four scholars each.

One parochial school on the Island has a 2017 scholar: Chris Koch, 17, a senior at St. Anthony's High School in South Huntington, took honors for research revolving around interactions between light and matter in the presence of a magnet. Koch is enrolled in the school's Science Scholars program, which combines four years of college-level science courses with advanced research.

"It's really taking off," Koch said of the program.

Forty of the 300 first-round winners will be named contest finalists later this month. Finalists qualify for all-expense-paid trips to Washington, D.C., in mid-March, where they vie for top awards.

New York, as usual, was far and away the most successful state, with a total of 934 student entrants, of whom 98 were named scholars. California was second with 104 entrants and 40 scholars, and Maryland third with 92 entrants and 22 scholars.

The range of interests among the students was exemplified by projects submitted from the Island.

Abbigayle Cuomo, a Commack High School senior, researched tropical cyclone tracks in the Atlantic. Nestor

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Tkachenko of Ward Melville High School in Setauket looked into the potential for flying automobiles. Michael Nachman of Paul D. Schreiber High School in Port Washington analyzed presidential primaries as predictors of general election results.

Cuomo, who has worked on her weather-related project since the spring, said her interest was piqued by the destruction wrought by superstorm Sandy in 2012. Like most of the scholars, the 17-year-old juggled research with a challenging academic schedule, which in her case this year consisted entirely of college-level International Baccalaureate courses.

"It was kind of intense," she said.

Cuomo conducted most of her labwork at Stony Brook University, where she was mentored by Brian Colle, a professor of atmospheric science. Colle also advised Regeneron scholar Ben Rhee, a senior at Syosset High School.

"They're always a joy to work with," said Colle, who has mentored high school students over the past 10 years.

Stony Brook officials reported yesterday that faculty helped train 21 students named Regeneron scholars, including 15 from the Island. The campus sponsors summer sessions that attract teenage researchers nationwide.

With Michael R. Ebert

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Ben Rhee



Yash Samantaray

### W. TRESPER CLARKE H.S.



Alby Joseph



Albert Liu

### WARD MELVILLE H.S.



Kirti Nath

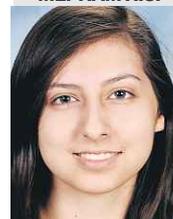


Kavya Tangella



Nestor Tkachenko

### WELLINGTON C. MEPHAM H.S.



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