
2 from La Jolla High win science honors:[7 Edition]

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LA JOLLA -- Research on San Diego Zoo gorillas and an attempt to teach a computer to understand written stories won honors for two La Jolla High School sophomores at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Detroit this week.

More than 1,200 ninth- to 12th-graders competed for scholarships, grants and other prizes in 14 categories in the 51st annual event.

Francis Song, 16, received a \$500 fourth-place award in computer science and a \$1,000 special award from the American Association for Artificial Intelligence. He also was offered a full scholarship to Drexel University in Philadelphia.

Francis wrote a program in Prolog, a computer language commonly used in artificial intelligence, to draw inferences from stories written in English. Francis said his program uses a database of facts and rules allowing the computer to perform a semantic analysis.

Blair Beverly, also 16, received a \$500 fourth-place award in zoology for his behavior study of lowland gorillas.

Blair examined how the gorillas at the zoo react to the absence of a silverback named Memba, the troop's alpha male. Blair said his findings suggest the silverback provides a calming sense of security to the others.

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