

Cherry Creek student scientist on her way to even more success



Cherry Creek High School senior Connie Liu had not heard of MicroRNAs until she interviewed the principal investigator of a lab at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.

She was intrigued by learning about the role that microRNAs are beginning to play in cancer biology. MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are small, RNA molecules encoded

in the genomes of plants and animals. RNAs (Ribonucleic acid) is one of the three major macromolecules (along with DNA and proteins) that are essential for all forms of life.

Liu was so intrigued, in fact, that she received top honors at the Region 2 Finals of the 2010-11 Siemens Competition in Math, Science & Technology held in Austin, TX, for her research on microRNAs and ovarian cancer. She went on to win a \$40,000 scholarship in the national finals of the competition. The competition is open to high school science students from across the country.

"Connie is the one of the most resourceful, young scientists I have ever mentored," said T.J. Donahue, who teaches Advanced Science Research at Cherry Creek High School. "She is an extraordinary, self-effacing, tenacious student of exemplary character and astounding intellect. Her experimental work is at the level one might hope to find in graduate school."

It's because of phenomenal students like Liu, that the Cherry Creek Schools Foundation is proud to support the school district and its students.

Liu had a busy high school career. She played varsity tennis for Cherry Creek High School and was president of Science Bowl, Math Club, and the Science Olympiad. She was a gold medal winner in the National Spanish Exam and a winner in the National Council of Teachers of English Superior Writing contest, as well as third place winner in the 2009 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in cellular/molecular biology.

This fall, she'll take her talents to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She plans to study aerospace engineering or nuclear engineering.

In 2008, Cherry Creek High School was the recipient of the Advanced Placement Siemens Award and received \$1000 for its math, science and technology departments.