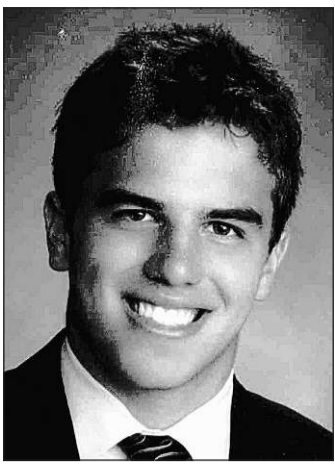


Vamsi Aribindi
Naperville North High School

If mankind ever colonizes Mars, it may very well be Vamsi Aribindi who makes it happen. Vamsi, a senior at Naperville North High School, plans to become an aerospace engineer. He dreams of designing spacecraft that will take settlers to Mars and hypersonic aircraft that will move people across the globe quickly and cheaply. "I feel that engineering and building new things is the best way to change the world," he said. Vamsi's academic record is a sea of A's. He says his motivation to perform well in school comes from his desire to achieve his dreams and to be a well-rounded person who is knowledgeable not only in science, but also in world affairs. Vamsi has been involved in numerous academic teams at Naperville North, including Scholastic Bowl, Worldwide Youth in Science and Engineering, Science Olympiad and math teams. He is also an Eagle Scout and a certified rescue diver. In the fall, Vamsi plans to attend the California Institute of Technology.

—Melissa Jenco

Vamsi Aribindi
Naperville North High School
Hometown: Naperville
Parents: Syam and Dr. Shanthy Aribindi
School sponsor: Martha Connor
Test scores: ACT: 34; SAT: 2270
Planned major: Mechanical engineering
Awards, honors: National Chemistry Olympiad; WYSE state champion; Junior Engineering Technical Society contest; National Merit finalist; National Honor Society; AP Scholar; Illinois State Scholar; state champion math team; third place in state Science Olympiad Team Physics Lab



Mark LaBelle
Wheaton Warrenville South

Mark LaBelle does more than read books and study. He also plays football, basketball, attends early student council meetings and likes to look at people's insides when he gets a chance. Mark is looking to turn his love of science and an interest in medicine — inspired by his orthopedic surgeon father — into his own surgical career. Mark was accepted into Northwestern University's honors program in medical education, which carried direct admittance into the university's medical school. Achieving that feat was a balancing act of studies, athletics and altruism. "It's all planning and hard work," Mark said. "It's tough to balance and juggle everything. You hit some rough spots, but you push through." Despite the academic rigor of his more-than-perfect grade point average, Mark said he simply couldn't give up athletics. "I love the competition, and I love the challenge that the games represent," Mark said. "As I've grown older, it's become a bigger part of me."

—James Fuller

Mark LaBelle
Wheaton Warrenville South
Hometown: Wheaton
Parents: Len and Stacy LaBelle
School sponsor: Julann Ferguson
Class rank: 1 out of 551
Test scores: ACT: 35
Planned college major: biology (pre-med), biomedical engineering
Awards, honors: Academic Achievement Award; Nelson Today's Top Student; National Honor Society; AP Scholar; Illinois State Scholar; Illinois General Assembly recognition; football Academic All-State

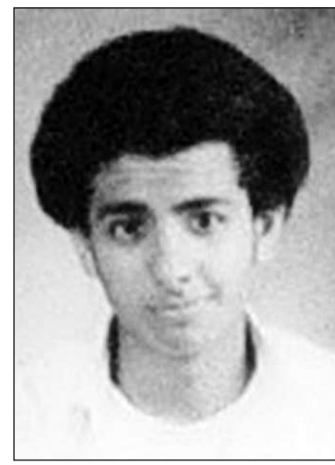


Nicole Lomotan
Glenbard North High School

It's no secret that most students who finish their high school careers at the top of their class owe a great deal of their success to their parents. Nicole Lomotan, a Glenbard North senior, is no exception. But Nicole's push to get ahead comes through a great deal of pain her family faced at an early age. The Bloomingdale girl's father died when she was just 8 years old. Since then, Nicole said she's committed herself to pursuing a career in medicine, in part, to do all she can to limit the pain other families face from such tragedy. "Obviously the death of my father created a great hardship in my life," Nicole said. "But it's also made me a stronger person. I've suffered things most of my peers haven't been through. I don't want others to go through what I've had to go through." When she's not working on her studies, Nicole plays volleyball and has been recognized as part of the Academic All-Conference Team. "It's taught me so much more than playing a sport," she said.

—Jack Komperda

Nicole Lomotan
Glenbard North High School
Hometown: Bloomingdale
Parents: Nati Lomotan
School sponsor: Ed Kasprovicz, counselor
Class rank: 1 out of 715
Test scores: ACT: 34
Planned major: Biological sciences
Awards, honors: National Merit Scholarship commended student; Illinois State Scholar; Academic Letter Award; National Honor Society; president of Mu Alpha Theta math honor society; Academic All-Conference Team in volleyball



Khalid Muneeb Abdul Majeed
College Preparatory School of America

Even though his near-perfect grades show that he's focused on academic success, Khalid Muneeb Abdul Majeed's personal activities reveal his true passion: helping others. When he's not studying or participating in activities like basketball, debate or Islamic Studies Club, the Lisle student tutors fellow students and works at area hospitals. His drive to give back is so strong that Khalid chose to forgo admission to top-tier schools like Northwestern and University of Chicago, and instead attend University of Illinois at Chicago so he can earn a medical degree on a career-track program. He credits his drive to give back to both his family and his religion. "Having the parents I have and the grandparents I have ... they try to help others every day," he said. "Looking at them is sort of motivation. And Islam preaches being of service to mankind."

—Elisabeth Mistretta

Khalid Muneeb Abdul Majeed
College Preparatory School of America
Hometown: Lisle
Parents: Mohammad Abdul and Fareeda Abdul Majeed
School sponsor: Nafe Hussein
Class rank: 1 out of 30
Test scores: ACT: 34; SAT: 2180
Planned major: Biology and English
Awards, honors: National Society of High School Scholars; AP Scholar with Distinction; National Merit Scholarship commendation; Illinois Student Assistance Commission scholar; WYSE awards



Amanda Schwartz
Glenbard West High School

School is a means to an end: It offers the tools necessary to give back, and Amanda Schwartz plans to maximize her opportunities. "I've always wanted to use school to achieve something — to help people," the Glenbard West High School senior said. Those who help guide her say she does just that. "She mentors our freshmen as a Senior Mentor, and teaches children the skills and joys of tennis," said counselor Kate Culloton. "Along with this caring nature, she is also a young woman of fine moral caliber and strong personal values. She will make an exceptional doctor one day." Amanda narrowed in on a career in medicine during her sophomore year in high school. With an uncle who's a vascular surgeon, she had a strong role model. But when she's not hunkering down with her own studies — or tutoring other students — she's focusing on athletics, particularly badminton and tennis.

—Catherine Edman

Amanda Schwartz
Glenbard West High School
Hometown: Glen Ellyn
Parents: Janet and Al Schwartz
School sponsor: Kate Culloton, counselor
Class rank: 2 out of 493
Test scores: ACT: 34
Planned college major: Biology
Awards, honors: National Honor Society treasurer; Illinois State Scholar; Illinois General Assembly recognition; French Honor Society; AMC Math competition; varsity tennis captain; varsity badminton captain; Model United Nations

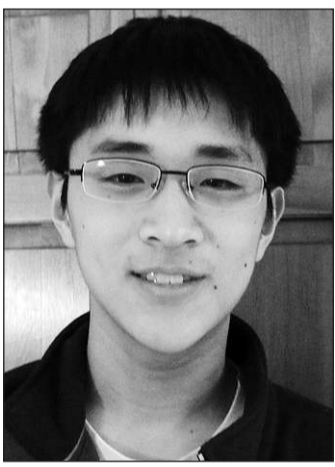


Jarna Shah
Lake Park High School

As a child, Jarna Shah buried her head in medical terminology books. It was an interest fueled by her mother, who was studying occupational therapy. Science became a passion. Presently, Jarna volunteers at St. Alexius Medical Center. Last summer, the 17-year-old Lake Park senior was an intern in a research lab at the University of Chicago. She helped research scientists test brain chemicals. "I learned that there is so much depth in the (science) field and no end to what you can accomplish," she said. In college, she plans to major in biomedical engineering and thinks she eventually may want to become an anesthesiologist. At Lake Park, Jarna is president of the science club, involved with the math team, and with youth and government groups. She ranks at the top of her class and has taken mostly honors courses.

—Kat Zeman

Jarna Shah
Lake Park High School
Hometown: Former resident of Roselle, recently moved to Barrington
Parents: Rajendra and Meena Shah
School sponsor: Christine Ward, counselor
Class rank: 1 out of 707
Test scores: ACT: 33 SAT: 2150
Planned college major: Chemistry or biomedical engineering
Awards, honors: Presidential Scholar, AP Scholar, National Merit Commended Scholar, Illinois State Scholar, Lake Park's 2007 Superintendent's Award of Excellence, second place in a state Five Star Science Fair, Lake Park's School Award for Academic Achievement, third place in Math Team competition



Tony Shen
Naperville Central

Through four years of high school, the lowest grade you'll find on Tony Shen's transcripts is an A-minus, but he doesn't care about that or his 4.638 GPA. It's the report cards of students he's helped that get his attention. Tony, 17, of Naperville, learned in early April that he was accepted to Harvard. He was happy, but again, it wasn't going to make or break his day. "For me, it's not accomplishing something and impressing everyone," he said. "I would never hesitate to help a guy out or ask for help when I need it, so I get my satisfaction when another student tells me he 'gets it.'" When he's not helping others achieve, Tony says he's a normal kid "just trying to keep a balanced life." Tony said his academic success can be linked to his parents never pressuring him to be a super student. He studies every day and reads regularly, but he also makes sure to find time for playing his acoustic guitar or violin. "I get stressed out, strum a few bars and it all goes away," he said. "It's the same thing with a game of tennis or basketball."

—Justin Kmitch

Tony Shen
Naperville Central High School
Hometown: Naperville
Parents: Guoyin and Jianfei Shen
School sponsor: Pam McNeely, Gifted Services Counselor
Test scores: ACT: 35
Planned college major: Biology
Awards, honors: National Merit Finalist; National Honor Society; AP Scholar with Distinction; JETS, second at nationals; Science Olympiad national qualifying team



Durga Thakral
Glenbard South High School

Watching a beloved teacher fight cancer while still putting her students first reinforced Durga Thakral's choice of a career in health care. "It showed me that medical efforts are truly, truly important in giving back (people's) potential to achieve great things," the 18-year old Glenbard South High School student said. "In that way, it's like a cycle of service." She's always loved math and physics, and wasn't sure which she'd pursue. When her teacher got sick, Durga saw how treatment empowered her to fight for her students. "That showed me I wanted to gear to medicine," the Lombard girl said. Last summer, Durga shadowed biologists at the National University of Health Sciences. "I see work in this field as an act of harnessing the human spirit of compassion within each individual and expressing it in the form of medical guidance and support. I want medicine to be my medium of expression, to be my means of inspiring others."

—Catherine Edman

Durga Thakral
Glenbard South High School
Hometown: Lombard
Parents: Raj and Sudha Thakral
School sponsor: Arthur C. Manson
Class rank: 1 out 296
Test scores: ACT: 34; SAT: 2280
Planned college major: Bioengineering
Awards, honors: Principal's leadership award; Suburban Prairie Conference Literary Festival first place; National Merit finalist; National Honor Society; AP Scholar; Scholastic Bowl; Science Olympiad; Illinois State Scholar; Spanish Honor Society president; Math Team co-captain; Poetry Slam 2007



Andrew Vogler
Downers Grove North

Andrew Vogler has a knack for science, biology in particular, and he wants to spend his life helping people. So the 18-year-old Downers Grove North High School student is working to become a doctor. "I have the ability, so the right thing to do is to use it to help people in need," Andrew said. "I like to get to the personal level and know that I'm helping someone and making a difference in a person's life." Andrew also has succeeded in athletics, playing basketball and soccer for four years. He also plays on a competitive traveling soccer team. Andrew believes balancing the stresses of a tough academic schedule and playing sports demonstrates his ability to manage the pressures of becoming and being a doctor. "As a goalie for the soccer team, all the pressure is put on your shoulders," he wrote. "My ability to perform under stress will help me perform my medicinal duties better. ... My efforts will hopefully help many people live better and longer lives."

—Kathryn Grondin

Andrew J. Vogler
Downers Grove North High School
Hometown: Downers Grove
Parents: Greg and Maria Vogler
School sponsor: Linda Augustyn
Class rank: 1 out of 565
Test scores: ACT: 36
Planned college major: Bioengineering
Awards, honors: Bausch and Lomb Award; National Merit commended scholar; National Honor Society; AP Scholar; Presidential Scholar; Illinois State Scholar; all-tournament team member for athletics; Chicago Fire All State All Academic Team



Fahim Zaman
College Preparatory School of America

During many of Fahim Zaman's trips to his parents' homeland of Bangladesh, he lived like a well-off resident. He was driven around on paved roads, played video games on computers with his cousins, watched TV and shopped for goodies. "But what about the part of the country that's beset with poverty?" he thought one day. "I thought I should see the real Bangladesh." During a recent trip, he spent time with workers who went deep into the villages and farmlands where there was no electricity and lots of flooding. He saw students with so little, but so much. "They're extremely grateful for every piece of knowledge they gain," he said. "Those people are so full of peace." That trip made Fahim grateful for everything around him, including his dad and his religion, Islam. "I have really complicated views of what success really is, but from my place in the world, it's a big picture and I have a really small part in it."

—Hafsa Naz Mahmood

Fahim Zaman
College Preparatory School of America
Hometown: Lombard
Parents: Asad Zaman and Zakia Zaman
School sponsor: Nafe Hussein
Class rank: 1 of 30
Test scores: SAT: 2320
Planned college major: Undecided
Awards, honors: Gold Honor Roll every semester; second place in state for biology from Worldwide Youth of Science and Engineering (WYSE); Fermilab Research Institute Student Recognition; National Merit Scholarship recognition