

Laurel Valley junior sets mark for success

In May, Jay Yusko raised the bar for all future Challenge Program award winners.

Yusko, a junior at Laurel Valley Middle/High School, accomplished something that no other winner had before: He won three out of the possible four categories that The Challenge Program recognizes: Yusko's accomplishment came in the areas of Community Service, Attendance and Best G.P.A. — he enrolled 92 hours of service, no absences and a 4.0 G.P.A.

It's quite a remarkable feat, but Yusko feels that success is part of any student's duty to the community.

"We (students) owe it to our community to be the best we can be," he said, "Because the community has put a lot into us over the years."

Yusko's positive outlook is something he attributes to his mother, who played an influential role in his childhood.

"She's an elementary school teacher, and her being in the education field gave me a lot of insight about it," Yusko said. "It was a unique experience that affected me deeply."

Yusko's respect for the educational system is inherent in everything he says about it. He feels that his teachers and cur-



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riculum at Laurel Valley have played a crucial role in fostering his personal growth throughout the years.

"The teachers at the school are such a big part to any success," Yusko said. "They have certainly been instrumental in my accomplishments."

In particular, Yusko noted that his enrollment in Laurel Valley's Gifted Education Program has been an invaluable opportunity. The program allows students to study independently in areas tailored to their individual interests. For Yusko, such an opportunity meant expanding his knowledge in the field of HTML. Web site programming for an entire year.

"I always wanted to learn it, but I never expected to have the time and resources to be able to," Yusko said. "The gifted

program really gives you the opportunity to learn things you wouldn't normally learn in school."

Yusko participates in numerous activities at Laurel Valley High School, ranging from concert band to reading competition to lighting and sound crew. He said his involvement with these activities has allowed him to gain diverse perspectives about life.

After high school, Yusko plans to attend college with a potential major in engineering and hopes to continue giving back to the community he loves. "I just don't want to let any opportunities pass me up," Yusko said. "I want to be the best person I can be."

This article is part of a human interest series that features recipients of The Challenge Program's four award categories: Most Improved, Best G.P.A., Most Community Service, and Best Attendance. TCP is a nonprofit organization located in Johnstown that provides financial incentives to students for successes they achieve while still in high school. TCP also aims to provide a bridge between high school students and the local business community.

Old habit

If gas prices dip, will drivers quz

BY JOSHUA BOAK
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

CHICAGO — With gasoline setting almost a dime below \$4 a gallon, drivers are finally enjoying a shred of relief from what seemed to be an unrelenting surge in fuel prices.

History indicates they could also return to their old habits if prices continue to drop, once again steering gas guzzlers onto highway entrance ramps as though crude oil never hit \$147 a barrel.

There already are signs that getting 60 miles per gallon has become less important to consumers, but many associated with hybrid vehicles and alternative energy say the latest effort to break petroleum's control over our daily lives will succeed despite evidence that past efforts pattered to a stop once oil became more affordable.



Larry Sves fills up his Smart car in Palo Alto he averages 42 miles per gallon and his car's t instantly responded by showing less interest in hybrids such as the Toyota Prius.

Searches for the Prius on Cars.com have plunged more than 50 percent since peaking in May. The auto market Web site provides a window into how consumers are thinking.

"There is a direct correlation between what people are searching for and gas prices," said Steve Nolan, a Cars.com spokesman.

"Whenever we see gas prices spike, we see an uptick in people searching for fuel efficient vehicles. And whenever we see gas prices

fall back into the

spike, we see an uptick in people searching for fuel efficient vehicles. And whenever we see gas prices