

Summer project offers head start for student

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — When it comes to preparing for the future, Jeanne Yax has got it down to a science.

The 17-year-old Greece resident is currently participating in a summer program at the Laboratory of Laser Energetics — sponsored by the College of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Rochester — that she hopes will give her a head start on her career.

Yax, who will be a senior at Nazareth Academy this fall, said she obtained information on the program last spring through the science department at the all-girls' school on Lake Avenue. After applying to the program, Yax was called in for an interview in May.

"They wanted to know what I liked about science and about my grades," recalled Yax. "I like physics — I just like the mechanics of everything."

In addition to Yax, nine other students are participating in the research program, which began July 1 and continues through Aug. 23. The students, who work 40 hours a week, are paid \$1,200 each for the project.

Under the supervision of a staff scientist at the laboratory, each student in the program has been assigned to a research project. In addition to the projects, students attend weekly lectures on a variety of scientific topics.

Although Yax said she hasn't started working with lasers, she said she is anxious to begin that phase of her project. Currently, she is loading data concerning multiphoton ionization into a computer to compare the results of various scientific studies.

The daughter of Michael and Dorothy Yax, the Nazareth student said her father — a mechanical engineer at Bausch and Lomb, Inc. — fostered her love for the

sciences. Yax said she has wanted to become a scientist ever since she was a young child.

Yax, who has maintained an "A" average in both math and science throughout her high school career, said she's pleased with how much she's learning during the summer program.

"The experience has taught me a lot about what kind of career I might want to go in to," said Yax, who plans to study electrical or mechanical engineering at the Rochester Institute of Technology in college.

The parishioner of St. John the Evangelist Church in Greece said she has been impressed with the help she has received from scientists at the laboratory — especially her supervisor David Meyerhofer.

"They are really good. They take time out of whatever they happen to be doing if I have a question and they are always ready to talk to me about anything," Yax said.

The youth said that even though the 10 students were given different projects, they are beginning to discover that their research is related.

"At lunch we all talk about what we are doing and we understand what everyone else is talking about," said Yax.

Yax said the primary aim of the research project is to develop nuclear fusion, which she considers to be an important energy source. Nuclear fusion, Yax explained, is more environmentally safe than nuclear fission because it does not create toxic wastes.

Yax said she sees her research as important because it can make a difference in the future development of energy sources.

"We can never tell in five years what new problems may come up in developing sources of energy," explained the Nazareth senior.

Although the information she's learning this summer will help her somewhat during



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer
Jeanne Yax of Nazareth Academy is participating in a summer research program at the Laboratory of Laser Energetics. The College of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Rochester sponsors the program.

her senior year, Yax said the experience will really come in handy in college.

In addition, Yax said she is finding out what it's like to work 40 hours a week.

"It doesn't seem like 40 hours a week because I'm enjoying what I am doing," noted Yax. "If I was working in a restaurant or in a store it would probably feel more like 40 hours."

At the end of the summer program, Yax and the other students will present the results of their research at a symposium for their teachers and parents. The students will also present the results of their summer project to their high school science classes this fall.

Yax admitted that some of the results of

her work have already become obvious. For instance, the Nazareth student said she has learned to accept constructive criticism with an open mind.

"I can accept a lot more people's ideas about different areas and I am able to look at many different ideas about my project," acknowledged Yax.

Although she acknowledged that she will miss working at the laboratory once school begins this fall, Yax said she knows she can always become involved with other projects.

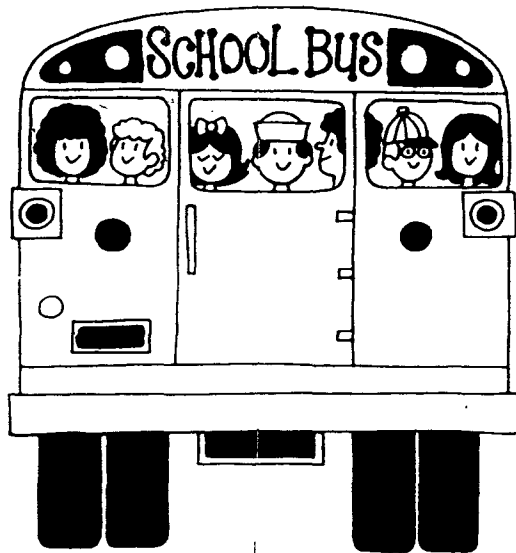
"I always want to be working where I can use my knowledge of math, science and engineering to solve some of the problems of the world," Yax said.

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