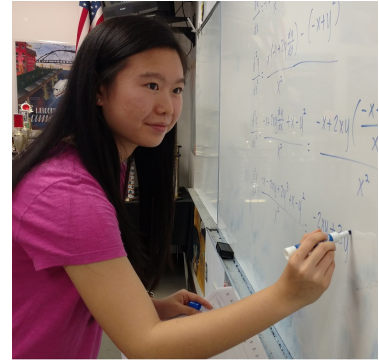


## Local student adds Sunshine State Scholar to growing list of awards, accolades

Helena Jiang gets a lot of joy—and a lot of awards—out of solving problems.

The Buchholz High School junior came up with a cheaper, easier way to detect air and water pollutants, work that recently took Best of Show honors in the State Science and Engineering Fair. She solves problems as a member of the schools math team, which just won first place in the Florida Mu Alpha Theta Competition.



Jiang also sees a problem with the proportionally small number of girls and African-American children who are achieving at high levels in math and science. So she's doing what she can to find a solution.

That includes coordinating one of two free summer math camps and a math competition hosted by the Buchholz High School math team. The goal is to promote a love of mathematics, particularly among children typically underrepresented in advanced math programs.

It's work that requires hundreds of hours that must be carved out of her very busy schedule, but she says the results are worth it.

"The feeling of seeing a student grow both mathematically and as a person is indescribable," said Jiang. "I want to extend the opportunities given to me to make the dreams of less fortunate students a reality."

"She's very passionate about working with younger kids and helping them develop that talent," said BHS math teacher Will Frazer. "When you talk to her you can see how much it moves her. Her energy is contagious, and other kids see what she does and want to follow her."

As a result of her commitment both to the subjects she loves and the work she's doing to spark that same love in others, Jiang has been named one of just 100 2019 Sunshine State Scholars. The Scholar program which was established more than twenty years ago, recognizes Florida's top 11<sup>th</sup>-graders in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) subjects, and is based on criteria that include advanced coursework and grades, test scores, extracurricular activities, an essay and awards and honors earned.

Jiang is also the Buchholz president and the Strategy and Regional Director of coderGirls, an international non-profit organization aimed at promoting the participation of K-12 girls in computer science and engineering. She also founded and leads a non-profit called Opalescence, which provides kits that help children create artificial opals as a way of sparking their interest in nanoscience.

"As a child I was able to fulfill much of my unending passion for science by exploring nanostructures," Jiang wrote in her Scholars essay. "I became determined to share my experiences so that nanoscience could touch the hands of students around the world."

*(more)*

Jiang has a busy few months ahead of her. She's headed to the Intel Science and Engineering Fair in Phoenix in mid-May with her project 'Novel Colorimetric Sensors for Detecting Chemicals in Vapor, Liquid and Solid Phases.'

In mid-June she goes up to Tallahassee for the Sunshine State Scholar think tank session. Then later that month, she's headed to Massachusetts as one of just 80 high school juniors from around the world who've been accepted into the Research Science Institute at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) a prestigious program that will involve taking college level courses, conducting research with university professors and presenting the results of that work.

Jiang's participation in that program means she'll miss the trip to Phoenix with her math teammates as they defend their national title. But she will still be organizing the team's Pre-Algebra Camp for children in the summer.

With all the academics, competition preparation and extracurricular activities on her plate, Jiang still finds time to compete in speech and debate, play tennis and even play the piano. How does she do it all, and do it so well?

"I honestly don't know," she said, "Sometimes it can be overwhelming, but once I see that finished science fair project or camp for kids, I know that it's worth it."

####