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## News

Local News

# 17-year-old to present at science conference

Thursday, December 13, 2007



By Terry McSweeney

SAN FRANCISCO -- This time of year, many teenagers are thinking about what they'll do during the holiday break, but one teenager in Menlo Park is thinking of something else entirely. He's preparing to make a presentation before 10,000 of the world's leading geophysicists in San Francisco.

Hassany Alejandre of Menlo Park is only 17-years-old, and he will be at the Moscone Center, showing off results of an experiment he conducted on spacecraft insulation. For a young man who hopes to answer questions about the far reaches of the universe, he sure is down to earth.

Hassany Alejandre looks and sometimes sounds like a pretty average teenager.

"I'm trying to stay calm," said Hassany Alejandre, student scientist.

But when he shows off results of his experiment for NASA's L.I.S.A. project, that's Laser Interferometer Space Antenna, he sounds like this:

"The theory is that planets displace waves, and waves spread out like waves on the ocean and L.I.S.A. will measure those waves," said Alejandre.

Alejandre is enrolled at Cañada College in Redwood City where he's finishing his high school courses and simultaneously taking college courses in calculus and biology.

"We all love Hassany. He is a good student, always sits in the front row. He is always focused and engaged and stays on task. He is the kind of student that you would like to have in your class, somebody who is always really on task." said Jen Petroelje, Cañada College teacher.

And he's the envy of his friends.

"That's something to be proud of. I'm just jealous, but good for him," said Keith Brown, Cañada College student.

"For the experiment I needed to build a circuit board that could read overall temperature," said Alejandro.

He brought the circuit board to life during his internship last summer at a lab at Stanford University.

Alejandro's efforts may help L.I.S.A. answer questions such as: How did the universe begin? Does time begin and end? Does space have edges?

Sei Higuchi is a Ph.D. candidate in applied physics; he guided Alejandro.

"I'm taking advantage of what he made last summer for my experiment," said Sei Higuchi, Stanford University researcher.

And now, Alejandro has been selected to participate in the American Geophysical Union's Bright Students Training as Research Scientists or Bright Stars Program.

"It's kind of intimidating because I'm just a high school student and it's definitely like -- get a hold of yourself," said Alejandro.

NASA plans to launch L.I.S.A. in 2015. It's exciting to think of what Alejandro may be doing by then.

"Space is out there," said Alejandro.

Today, Alejandro presents his work to the 10,000 scientists at the American Geophysical Union Convention at Moscone Center. He will also have lunch with scientists and symposium speakers. Again, he is just 17-years-old.

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