

# Bangor senior 'still in shock' over science contest win

BY DAWN GAGNON  
BDN STAFF

BANGOR — Bangor High School senior Paige Brown said last week that she had no idea that she'd take home a first-place medal in the 2016 Intel Science Talent Search competition until she heard her name called out during the awards ceremony.

"It was a complete surprise — they didn't let on anything," the 17-year-old Bangor resident said late last Wednesday afternoon while waiting in a Washington, D.C., area airport for her flight back to Bangor.

"They announced the third- and second-place winners, and when I wasn't among those, I thought, 'OK. I can calm down now. I'm not going to get anything,'" Brown said.

"Actually, I'd been looking out over the tables — each of the tables had a number on it — and I was factoring all of the numbers to take my mind off of it," she said. "I was in the middle of factoring 54 when they said 'Paige Brown,' and I said, 'Oh my gosh! Wait. What?'"

"I could not believe it. I am so excited," she said. "I'm still in shock."

Brown's science project, which involved inventing a mechanism for improving water quality, received one of three first-place awards — worth \$150,000 each — during the Intel Science Talent Search awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.



PHOTO COURTESY PAIGE BROWN

**Bangor High School senior Paige Brown, center, with her mother, Heather Brown, left, and research mentor, Cary James, who heads Bangor High's science, technology and engineering department. The three are shown after Paige Brown won the First Place Medal of Distinction for Global Good, which recognizes a finalist who demonstrates great scientific potential through their passion to make a difference, during the 2016 Intel Science Talent Search contest.**

The awards are a program of the Society for Science & the Public and the nation's most prestigious pre-college science and math competition, which this year celebrates its 75th anniversary.

Brown won the First Place Medal of Distinction for Global Good, which recognizes a finalist who demonstrates great scientific

potential through their passion to make a difference.

Brown studied the water quality of six environmentally impaired local streams with high E. coli levels and five with high phosphate contamination levels.

Brown's research project, titled "Identifying and Remediating the Sources of Pollution in Impaired Bangor

Streams," won the Maine Stockholm Junior Water Prize last year, and she took home a fourth-place award of \$500 in the Earth and Environmental Sciences category at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair last spring, where she was awarded a full four-year scholarship to Drexel University.

The teen scientist's mother, Heather Brown, and her research mentor and teacher, Cary James, who heads Bangor High's science, technology and engineering department, were on hand Tuesday night to cheer her on. Her father, Daniel Brown, works on a container ship and was out at sea at the time, so she emailed him the news.

"The email was the first news he had of that. He was incredibly excited for me. He said he was very proud," she said.

Paige Brown credits James for sparking her interest in better water quality.

"Really, the person who inspired me most was my teacher, Mr. Cary James. He's very

involved in water research, and he got me inspired to do this research," Brown said. "He started the STEM program. He started the stormwater program with the partnership between UMaine and other Maine high schools."

What she learned from being involved in those programs "gave me the resources I needed to really begin my research and get to where I am today."

Brown said she has plans for her prize money.

"I'm going to put it toward college," she said. "It was really quite a relief because now it means I don't have to worry about paying for college. I don't have to worry about how much it's going to cost because \$150,000 covers pretty much everything."

As far as what's next, Brown said she will continue her research and will over the next several months present at, or compete in, several more science-related events in Maine, New England and elsewhere in the nation.

But for the near term, all

she wants is to catch up on some sleep.

Her plane was not scheduled to land in Bangor until midnight, and she noted that she'd been "fairly sleep deprived this week because of all the excitement. I think last night, I only got three hours." To that end, Brown said she might take Thursday off from school.

Superintendent Betsy Webb said that the Bangor School Department is proud of Brown and her accomplishments.

"This amazing young woman has taken full advantage of quality instructional program offerings in Bangor High's STEM Academy to further her knowledge in order to address water quality issues facing our world and in our local community," Webb said.

"Watch for this well-rounded young woman's name, for we know her path continues to climb, and she has great things ahead in her future!"

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