Local News

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Summer Sounds of Salem concert
The free concert begins at 11

Nano science brought to life for Albany High students

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ALBANY — For a high school sophomore aspiring to enter a pre-med program after graduation, the prospect last fall of participating in a pilot program with the state University at Albany's College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering was too much to resist.

Nine months later Clinton Mathai, 15, of Albany and 19 of his peers at Albany High School were recognized for completing an introductory course offered as part of the inaugural program — a joint venture between CNSE and the City School District of Albany.

Two things that distinguished the program from Mathai's other classes were the monthly field trips to the UAlbany facility and the laboratory exercises, he said.

"The labs were great because they backed up a lot of what we learned in class," Mathai explained.

Mathai admitted that CNSE faculty were at first cautious about the amount of hands-on involvement the students had. After all, the facility boasts millions of dollars of sophisticated equipment supporting technologies used in state-of-the-art clean rooms and for ground-breaking research at the molecular level. But as the year progressed confidence grew almost as much as did the excitement shared by faculty and students alike about what was being taught.

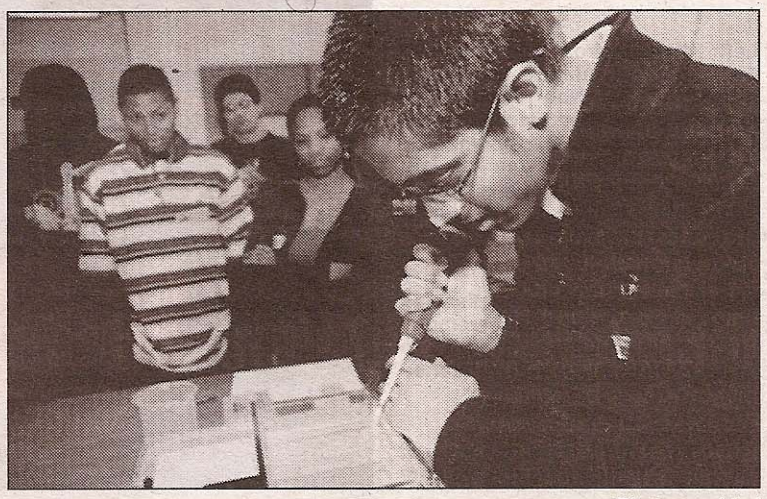

Photo provided

Clinton Mathia demonstrates a project completed in Introductory Nano High, a pilot program between Albany High School and UAlbany's College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering. Looking on are other members of the project.

"Now I have a much better understanding of nano-technology applications in the real world, and especially in medicine," he said.

For instance, Mathia learned about Bucky Balls, or soccer ball-shaped molecules of pure carbon that can be used to deliver drugs to specific areas of the body more efficiently than conventional methods of drug therapy. They are said to be bringing cancer research to the next level, Mathai said.

"This way, you can isolate treatment to a specific area and it's safe because carbon can be easily broken down by the body," he said. "Some of the stuff we learned about seemed like it was right out of science fiction."