

Santa Teresa senior wins three Almaden Valley Rotary Club speech contest honors

By Linda Forrester

Associate Editor

Santa Teresa High School senior Jessica Megginson has won the annual Almaden Valley Rotary Club speech contest at three levels. This year's theme was "Preserving Planet Earth" and speeches were limited to 4-1/2 minutes and had to meet the Rotary four-way test—is it true, fair, beneficial to all, and will it establish good will and friendship.

"I've always loved to talk, but I got involved in speech in my sophomore year in Virginia," Megginson said. "It was the thing to do back there." She is also interested in acting, music, and drama, and this seemed a natural next step to her.

Since she's been at Santa Teresa, Megginson credits her teacher, Laura Gshwend, with honing her speaking skills. "Mrs. Gshwend builds up the best in the kids," she said. "She really has gotten personally involved in my training. She'll go over speeches with me step by step and points out little details that can really make a difference in my delivery."

Megginson won the local contest easily with her speech, "Living in a Garbage Can," but at the Area level, Bruce Bondelie, Almaden's contest coordinator, couldn't believe it when Jessica wasn't named winner or runner-up. "I've judged these contests before," he said, "and as far as I could see, she'd won far and away. I didn't think my judgment could be that far off."

"I was disappointed," Megginson said, "but not devastated. I had prayed before I went out and told God that He knew what I wanted the money for, so

I'd just trust Him to provide it this way or another."

Bondelie questioned the results and in going over the points again, it was found that an error had been made and Megginson had, in fact, won.

At the District level at the Red Lion Inn, covering Oakland to Monterey, it was a clear win before an audience of about 300. "I felt relaxed," Megginson explained, "because we'd had our Senior Prom there last year and the room was familiar."

Megginson plans to use her prize money to tour the United States and Europe this summer with an international, interdenominational Christian singing group, the Continental Singers. "I'd seen them when I was nine and wanted to grow up and be in the Continentals," she said. "Last year, I found their return card that I'd saved from that time and sent an audition tape, application, and biography, and they accepted me."

On hearing that the number one fear in the United States was fear of speaking in front of a group, Megginson couldn't understand it. This young woman, who was just voted Most Talented Senior in her class, had recently gone around to various classes at school to recruit people for the Speech Club. She thinks anyone can learn to speak and everyone should, if they hope to succeed in their careers. Her parting "zinger" to the kids was, "And, if you've got a mouth, you're half way there."

Megginson plans to attend UC Irvine majoring in theater arts, and wants a career that teaches others that communicating is fun, whether it's through speech, drama, mime, clowning or singing.

May 28, 1991

Jessica Megginson
6461 San Ignacio Ave.
San Jose , CA 95119

Dear Almaden Valley Rotary Club,

I apologize for this letter being long overdue. I wanted to thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to participate in this year's Rotary Speech Competition. The contest proved to be a REWARDING experience in more ways than one!!

I commend you for giving High School students an opportunity to exercise their public speaking skills, since these skills are so crucial to success in the future. I also want to thank you for entertaining such a timely and important subject as "Preserving Planet Earth!" I hope that the words spoken by myself and my fellow orators were heard by your hearts. It is my wish that these words have moved each of you to take some actions towards preserving this beautiful planet!

Finally, I would like to say a special "thanks" for the monetary prize! That really put the icing on the cake!

Thanks so much...and remember...**WE ARE NOT LIVING IN A
GARBAGE CAN!!!**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Megginson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jessica Megginson