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Southside Place teenager aces the ACT exam / Kylene Wood 1 of 5 in Texas to net perfect score

By ARLENE NISSON LASSIN, Houston Chronicle Correspondent

KYLENE Wood, 15, a senior at Bellaire High School, attained a perfect score of 36 on the ACT college entrance exam she took in June.

In a letter Wood received in late August, 82 students nationwide out of the 365,000 students who took the exam achieved a perfect score on the June exam. In Texas, five students achieved a perfect score of 36.

Wood also took the SAT, scoring a 1560 out of a perfect 1600 on the old exam, and 2350 out of 2400 on the new SAT exam, which includes a writing portion.

"I was surprised at my ACT score because I did very little preparation for the ACT test," Wood said. "I did lots of preparation for the SAT's but I think that helped with this test. The science portion of the ACT test, with analysis of lab experiences, is something I do well and that I am interested in, so that helped me, too."

Wood skipped sixth and seventh grade at Memorial Hall, a private school, and transferred to Houston Independent School District's Pershing Middle School as an eighth-grader in 2001-02.

She entered Bellaire as a freshman in the 2002-03 school year and will graduate in May.

Wood, who lives in Southside Place, said she is motivated by her parents. Her father, Gordon Wood, is a technology expert based in Taiwan, and her mother, Ying Ying Wood, is a physician originally from Taiwan.

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Her sister Chloe, 14, is a junior at Bellaire High School.

"My parents are always pushing me to do things, so that is how I stay motivated," Wood said. "Plus, if you go to Bellaire High School and you take honors classes you have to be very motivated because it is very competitive there."

Wood plans to follow in her mother's footsteps and attend medical school. She spent last summer in England studying stem cell research at Oxford University.

"I went for three weeks in July with a group from Bellaire High School with a teacher, Ms. Sperotto," Wood said. "We got to choose what we wanted to study, and I chose stem cell research. I saw how stem cells affect melanoma cancer cells. It was very cool.

"The reason I wanted to study that is that I feel there is so much false information on stem cells, and it is important to know about what stem cells can do in medicine."

Before medical school, Wood hopes to be accepted at Rice University, where she has "wanted to attend forever." She is applying to other colleges, too.

Wood is a member of the Bellaire High School debate team and a short distance runner on the school's track squad.

She also provides peer assistance tutoring for Bellaire students in science and math.

Ying Ying Wood said she knew her daughter had the ability to do well on the test.

"I am very proud of her and she does very well when she puts her mind to it," Ying Ying Wood said. "She had to be pushed a little because I knew she was capable but she needed to try her best.

"That is what we have always emphasized to her. Use your talents and do your best."

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KYLENE WOOD

- "Age:" 15

- "Occupation:" Bellaire High School senior

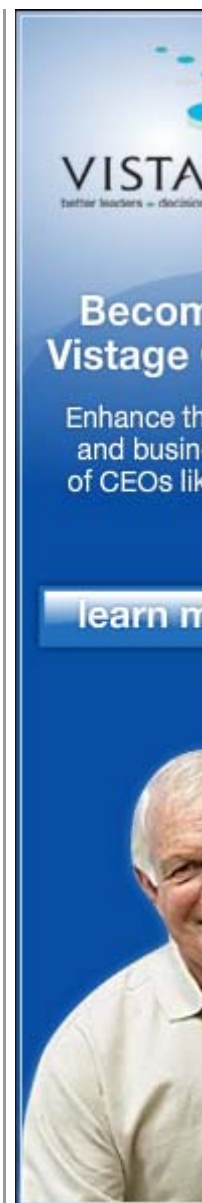
- "Community connection:" Southside Place resident

- "Fast fact:" She is one of 82 students nationwide, out of the 365,000 who took the ACT exam, to achieve a perfect score of 36.

- "Quick quote:" "My parents are always pushing me to do things, so that is how I stay motivated."

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ABOUT THE ACT



-Originally the American College Testing exam, the test was first administered in 1959. It was renamed the ACT exam in 1996.

-The test is divided into four sections: math, English, reading and science.

-The national average score is 20.5.

-The ACT score is equally as acceptable as the SAT as a college entrance exam at most U.S. universities and colleges.

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