

## Southwood's biotech program gets new equipment

March 8, 2008

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Students in Southwood High School's Biotechnology Magnet Academy now have \$100,000 worth of new equipment that will help accelerate their learning.

The new classroom materials include eight electrophoresis systems, two centrifuges, two inverted phase microscopes, one autoclave, eight bacti-cinerators and two storage cabinets. The equipment will help the magnet program offer two new classes — microbiology along with molecular and cellular biology. Both are collegiate courses, said Misti Davis, director of the magnet academy.

Many young adults are never presented with the resources and tools necessary to advance their interests and skills," said Southwood Principal Ken Wood. "The generosity of donors to the microbiology and cell labs provides yet more opportunity and growth for our young, aspiring student body."

Donors for the class equipment are: the Douglas F. and Marion S. Attaway

Foundation, the Charles T. Beard Foundation, Capital One Bank, The Committee of One Hundred, The Community Foundation of Shreveport-Bossier, Douglas F. and Marion S. Attaway Charitable Income Trust Advised Fund and Dr. George A. Khoury. Fundraising for the program was coordinated by the Biomedical Research Foundation of Northwest Louisiana.

"The biotech academy is particularly endearing to us because it's the only one of its kind," said Jay D. Meyers, senior director of development for the Biomedical Research Foundation. "We are very excited that the community was so generous to make this happen for the students. They've really embraced this program, and it's really exciting to see the benefits."



Joshua Calvin (left), 14, and Monica Moore, 14, work together to extract DNA from strawberries in microbiology lab Tuesday morning at Southwood High School. Donors who gave financially to the program were treated to a tour of the facilities Tuesday. (Greg Pearson/The Times)

Southwood's biotechnology program is sponsored through a partnership with the Biomedical Research Foundation, Southwood High School, LSU Health Sciences Center in Shreveport, Louisiana State University-Shreveport, Centenary College and local biotech companies.

"The partnership is committed to creating a competent, well-trained workforce necessary to successfully attract and retain biotechnology-based industry to north Louisiana," said Jack Sharp, Biomedical Research Foundation president.

Meyers said a goal of the program was to help the students move into jobs in the biotech field.

The Biotechnology Magnet Academy began in 2006, with student coursework on each grade level. The ninth grade focuses on physiology and anatomy, 10th-graders focus on microbiology, 11th-graders study molecular and cellular biology and seniors study research techniques and end with an off-campus research internship.

Tony Giordano, assistant dean of research and business development for the LSU Health Sciences Center in Shreveport, helped to design the curriculum and advised on the equipment to be purchased for the labs.

"Microbiology and molecular and cellular biology are introductory courses to biotechnology," he said. "These subject areas are briefly reviewed in high school biology courses. The academy's accelerated approach of offering these two semester courses will put them significantly ahead of their peers."

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March 8, 2008

