

## **Southwood student to address Biomedical Research Foundation**

**Demri Robinson is one of Biotechnology Magnet's inaugural students.**

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Without an advanced degree or even a high school diploma, Southwood High sophomore Demri Robinson has earned recognition in the world of biotechnology.

His work in the school's Biotechnology Magnet Academy, which prepares students for careers in medicine, research or lab work, will put him in the spotlight as a guest speaker for Biomedical Research Foundation's annual luncheon Thursday.

He's the only minor on the program, said Misty Davis, program coordinator.

But Robinson, son of Laquita and Walter Taylor, of Shreveport, remains modest about the opportunity to address the superintendent of Caddo Parish schools, area doctors, researchers and fellow classmates in what could be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

"In a way, I'm surprised they chose me," Robinson, an A student, said. "But it's good to know that I'm meeting the expectations of my teachers and all the program directors."

The academy partners with the Biomedical Research Foundation, Southwood High School, Caddo Parish public schools, LSU Health Sciences Center and biotech companies. Students enter the program as freshmen and complete courses that address the Bioscience Skills Standards.

The first year, the students take advanced placement biology courses taught by teachers who worked in medical or research science labs before becoming instructors. The second year, the focus is chemistry, microbiology and genetics, and the third year advances to Chemistry II, molecular and cell biology.

The academy opened in the fall with 35 students, and administrators say Robinson is one who sets an example.

"We have quite a few good students in the program, but we felt like Demri represents the group and the school well," Davis said. "He is extremely intelligent and a very respectful child. I haven't actually taught him, but his teachers speak highly of him, and he has a very strong work ethic, which is shown well. He is a shining star."

Robinson joined the program because of his love for science, he said. His plans are to become a doctor, and he said the academy is preparing him for the profession.

"I have to admit, it's very, very hard," he said. "It's incredible, almost like overdrive. It's like hooking up a battery, but to 40 cars. "But though it's hard, it pays off in the end."

Laquita Taylor is proud of her son.

"He has exceeded well beyond my belief," she said. "As far as the program and the curriculum, I'm proud of it and where it's going to take him."