

## Whitman Valedictorian Pursues Environmental Research

Whitman senior Tehreem Rehman is one of a fortunate few motivated, academically talented high school students who, in the summer between her junior and senior years of high school, took the opportunity to engage in hands-on research in science, math, or engineering at Stony Brook University as part of the Simons Summer Research Program. Tehreem worked with distinguished faculty mentors, learned to use laboratory techniques and tools, became part of active research teams, and experienced life at a research university.

Tehreem spent 8 weeks last summer studying the effects of methyl mercury in our environment on the food chain. Methyl mercury, a neurotoxin, is the form of mercury that is most easily bioaccumulated in organisms. (For more information, go to <http://toxics.usgs.gov/definitions/bioaccumulation.html>.) Tehreem's research focused on how mercury that accumulates in fish is transferred to baby fish, to human mothers, and, finally, to human fetuses and infants.

The methyl mercury that pollutes our environment is easily absorbed into the fatty muscle tissue of fish, the parts we most like to eat. "For peoples in the very northern hemisphere, scientists are finding an alarming drop in IQ rates in children and are beginning to zero in on methyl mercury," explained Tehreem. "Apparently the amount of this toxin in human babies is 5 to 10 times greater than the amount found in the mother. That's an alarming rate, and since fish and wale blubber is their main food source, we are finding that the toxin is being maternally transferred through the placenta and via the mother's milk into their babies."

Tehreem's interest in environmental pollutants has also involved her in the fight to ban the use of bisphenol-A (BPA) in baby bottles in Suffolk County. This chemical is widely used in plastic bottles and is a known carcinogen that is released into the liquid in the bottle when heated. Tehreem will continue to focus on her passion for science and research next year when she majors in earth and environmental engineering at Columbia University.

Here at Whitman, Tehreem has been a key member of the Whitman Challenge team, which currently competes on the popular Cablevision News 12 show. "I really am going to miss the Whitman community," Tehreem said. "My friends, the faculty, and the administrators were so supportive in anything I wanted to try. I've been active in the LI Teen Activist Group as well, and I want to continue that important work." When told that she has been named valedictorian of the class of 2009, Tehreem called the award a great honor, noting that because of the support she received, she has never been afraid to take more challenging classes. She also said that she feels fortunate to have found a good balance between enjoying her teen years and pushing herself to new and exciting areas of interest. Look out Columbia: One of Whitman's best is headed your way.

**Bartholomew Associates Inc**  
A D V E R T I S I N G / P U B L I C R E L A T I O N S