

INTEL CONTEST

Valley whiz kids win big

Bay Area students score
'junior Nobel Prizes'

By Mike Zapler

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WASHINGTON — David Liu started writing his own computer games at the ripe age of 6. By the time he was 11, he was running a one-kid programming shop online, winning jobs over bidders decades older.

And that, by all indications, was just the beginning.

At an awards ceremony here Tuesday night, the 18-year-old Lynbrook High School senior took second place and a \$75,000 cash prize in the nation's most



David Liu
Lynbrook High senior among two from South Bay to finish in the Intel contest's top 10.

prestigious science fair, the Intel Science Talent Search.

Lynnelle Ye, 18, a senior at Palo Alto High School, finished fourth and will return to California with an extra \$40,000. It's the first time in the competition's 60-plus-year

history that two Bay Area students have finished in the top 10 of what's known as "the junior Nobel Prizes" of science contests.

"I've always wanted to figure out how things work — the computer, the software," said David, who's probably heading to Stanford in the fall. "I didn't really take things for granted."

David's winning creation is a program that searches digital images for key characteristics, or "concepts," such as buildings or trees. The idea came to him when he was looking for a better way to organize his family photos.

His invention has already been put to use by NASA/Ames Research Center (where David worked as an intern) to pinpoint construction activity near oil pipelines in Alaska — a frequent cause of pipeline breaks.

But the application could

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