

## People

# Rye Brook 10-year-old wins state competition

By Jananne Abel

Ten-year-old Josephine Yalovitser of Rye Brook was selected as the 2007 Pre-Teen New York Senior Titleholder during a program held in August at the Crown Plaza Meadowlands Hotel in Secaucus, N.J.

Josephine was chosen for her academic achievement, volunteer service, school honors and activities, development of personal skills and abilities, general knowledge, communicative ability and on-stage acknowledgement of accomplishments. These were the seven criteria on which she was evaluated.

She also won the talent portion of the competition and went home with \$1,500 in educational bonds, a jacket that says "Pre-Teen New York Senior 2007" and a banner that says the same on the front with her first name on the back.

For the talent show she played a musical composition she had written called "Dancing Leaves" on piano along with an orchestra playing it on a recording in the background. Earlier this year she had entered this piece in a competition called "Hey, Mozart" and it was among 15 songs picked from the Northeastern region to be arranged for an orchestra.

Playing before an audience of about 300 people, Josephine said she was nervous.

For the speech portion of the competition, for which she was first runner-up, she talked about the more than 12 million children in the world who are hungry.

She said what she liked best about competing was the girls she met. "It was an amazing feeling to be able to socialize with stunning young girls from all around New York State, just to get to know them," she said. "You make life-lasting friendships."

Josephine has now qualified to represent New York State at the 2008 Pre-Teen America National



Josephine Yalovitser won the title of 2007 Pre-Teen New York Senior earlier this year and will go on to compete for the national title in July 2008.

Competition in Baton Rouge, La. July 2-7, 2008. More than \$25,000 in scholarships, educational bonds, prizes and awards will be presented at the national competition.

For that, she will have to do a different performance--probably another of her musical compositions--another speech, more volunteer work and more preparation.

Josephine isn't quite sure how she was invited to compete in the first place. "One day a packet came in the mail," she said. "I was interested in it and decided to try it out. Somehow I was chosen, but I still don't know how." She thinks it may be because she qualified for and eventually won the national PTA Reflections competition for musical composition in September.

The Blind Brook Middle School sixth grader had three months to prepare. During that time she went on line and did a lot of quizzes, did a lot of volunteer work for the community, had to focus more on her talent and learned how to communicate better. One of the things she did for the community was a food drive, going door-to-door in Rye Brook with flyers and then returning to pick up the food. She donated the food she collected to the Westchester Food Bank.

Josephine is the daughter of Tatyana and Michael Yalovitser of 54 Talcott Rd. Michael said it was exciting being around future leaders at the New York State competition. "There was lots of positive energy."

The Pre-Teen America program, founded in 1990, was designed to recognize the nation's outstanding pre-teens as well as to provide an avenue to promote high moral standards of excellence, fellowship, family values and social development for girls from 7 to 12 years old. There is a junior division for girls from 7-9 and a senior division for girls from 10-12.