

Vernonia teen one of Oregon's "Destination Imagination" team

By Judy Hill

Vernonia teen Roman Mattus is full of sparkling enthusiasm when he talks about the seven-member Destination Imagination team of which he

garnered the coveted Da Vinci Award for outstanding innovation and creativity, two Renaissance Awards for excellence in engineering, and a Spirit of DI Award for good sportsmanship.

Andrew Mattus, were concerned about crowded classrooms and the quality of education available in their former town. They moved to Vernonia two years ago.

Roman said he is a self-motivated learner and has enhanced his zest for knowledge, as well as his independence and maturity, with the home-schooling curriculum provided through the Oregon Home Education Network. Through contact with OHEN, Roman met and was asked to join their DI team. He calls his involvement with DI a life-changing experience, giving him social skills, creativity and self-confidence he might not have developed for years.

Which is precisely the point of DI. Formerly called Odyssey of the Mind, DI is an international non-profit organization for kindergarten through college students, teaching life skills and expanding imaginations through creative problem solving.

Tournaments are held at different levels, consisting of two parts related to a yearly theme. In the Instant Challenge category, teams are given a scenario to problem solve. They must brainstorm the solution in four minutes and perform it for the judges in three minutes.

In the state competition, Roman's team was given the problem of performing an opera involving a hero and a villain. Teamwork, fast thinking, confidence, courage and creativity on a dime obviously went into their ability to respond and produce a winning result in four minutes.

The second part of the competitions involves a longer term project called a Team Chal-

lenge. This year's DI theme is "Food for Thought."

The OHEN team designed what they call "the infernal machine" which is a mechanical and electrical maze through which five raw eggs must pass unbroken. The team members and the eggs are characters in a plot, in this case involving good and evil, the eggs being bad "hench-eggs" who have captured the chef, played by one of the team members. There are costumes, music, props, dialogue, a narrator (Roman's role) and an instant element provided by the judges just before each competition performance. The fun is in the fact that things never go exactly the same way twice. Things happen, and part of the challenge is to cope with the unforeseen in a way that makes sense. For example, the eggs don't always make it through unbroken, and the plot must spontaneously be adjusted to accommodate mishaps.

In addition to Roman, team members include Jake Edmonds of Aloha, Lauren and Alaina Grimm of North Plains, Caitlin and Matthew Letts of Beaverton, and Keegan O'Connor of SW Portland. These area students will be representing their towns and Oregon on a world-class platform.

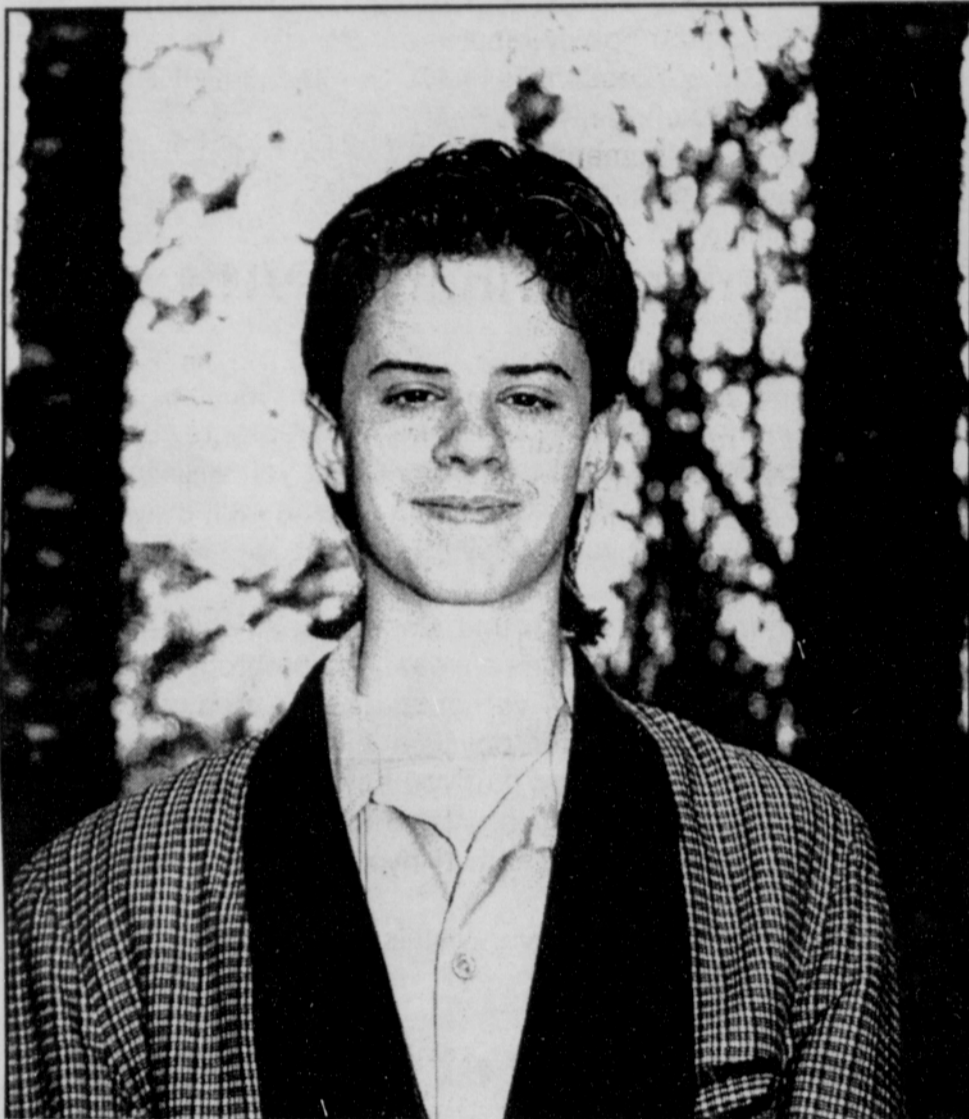
Another challenge for the team is the fact that they must raise the money for their trip to Ames in very short order. They will need \$10,000 for transportation for the team, their coaches and project, plus fees

and room and board for five days.

OHEN is holding a garage sale Fri.-Sat., April 28-29, at 3395 NW 164th Terrace, Beaverton. Donations of items may be made through Cindie Edmunds at 591-0477.

Tax-deductible donations may be sent to Oregon Home Education Network, Destination Imagination Team, P.O. Box 218, Beaverton, OR 97075-0218. Names of sponsors who have contributed \$100 or more will be listed in an upcoming issue of the Hillsboro Argus. Corporate donors should contact Christine Webb at 647-2992.

To learn more about Destination Imagination, see their web page at <http://dini.org/>.



Roman Mattus enjoys the stimulation of Destination Imagination.

is a part. After winning the Oregon Regional competition and the Oregon State Championship, the DI team will be heading to the world competition, Destination 2000, at Ames, Iowa, May 24-28. They will face stiff competition against 60 teams from around the world.

In the regional and state competitions, the team also

Pretty heady stuff for a group of students who are 15 years old, with one member just turning 18. What makes the team even more unique is that these students are all home schooled, and this is the first time a home-schooled DI team has won at the state level.


Roman left public school in the fourth grade because he and his parents, Denise and

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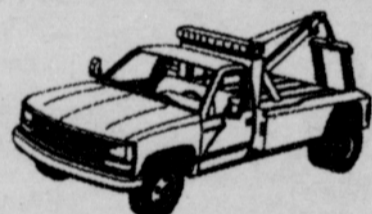
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