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Article published Jul 12, 2007

## Math, science lead to elite camp for Kassie Stewart

By JONA ISON

Gazette Staff Writer

KINGSTON - Kassie Stewart never thought she was very good at math until she met her seventh-grade teacher.

"In fifth and sixth grade, I had a hard time at math, but last year I had a teacher who was fabulous and she was, like, 'Girls rule!'" Kassie said.

Melissa Payton was able to make Kassie feel more confident, so when she found out - via her talented and gifted teacher at Zane Trace Middle School - about some summer math and science camps, she decided it was something she wanted to do. After writing an essay and getting recommendations, including one from Payton, Kassie, 13, was selected as one of 18 girls in the state to attend the Young Women's Summer Institute.

"I think it's a great opportunity to be able to do it because it's awesome that there's only 18 girls ... to be able to have the opportunity and the learning experience," Kassie said.

Kassie wound up having to choose between the YWSI camp and another offered at The Ohio State University at the same time. She chose YWSI because it involved not only math but also science and technology. The YWSI camp also is an over-night camp versus a day camp.

Her mother, Marsha Stewart, is pleased her daughter wants to do something educational with her summers.

"I think it's always about opportunity and experiences. Anything is going to help her grow ... be great for her future ..."

Kassie is hoping the classes will help prepare her better for advanced classes she'll begin in the fall at Chillicothe City Schools where she will attend through open enrollment. Thinking of her future, Kassie and Marsha said they felt Kassie had more opportunities at Chillicothe with not only advanced courses, but also swimming and other extracurricular activities.

Right now, Kassie is thinking of a career in engineering or law and has her heart set on Harvard. She is involved in several activities including quiz bowl, Power of the Pen, National Junior Honor Society, band and 4-H. Kassie also has been a past state winner in the 4-H health and safety speaking contest. Last week, she won at the district level, earning her third opportunity to compete at the state fair.

YWSI is in its eighth year and is a week-long program sponsored by Ohio Supercomputer Center in Columbus, Kent State University and Wittenberg University for middle-school girls in Ohio. The camp's goal is to get more girls interested in math, science and technology fields. Kassie will attend the camp during its July 29 to Aug. 4 session in Columbus.

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