



## Representing MAS at the American Junior Academy of Science

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AJAS, or the American Junior Academy of Science, is in its own words “the only national honor society recognizing America’s premier high school students for outstanding scientific research.” The society meets once a year, alongside the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), where students who have been chosen by their state Academies of Science are given the opportunity to present their research and meet with top scientists attending the AAAS meeting.

Last year, I was fortunate enough to be chosen by the Minnesota Academy of Science to attend and present my research at the AJAS convention, held February 2009 in Chicago, IL. From the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup>, I not only got the chance to participate in the numerous AJAS-specific activities, but, as an AJAS delegate, I was given full access to the entire AAAS convention, truly an amazing opportunity to learn from the hundreds of attending scientists. We heard James J. McCarthy, AAAS President, deliver a detailed address on climate change, and I attended a seminar explaining how scientists’ emphasis on the leading edge of research led reporters to the mistaken impression that the scientific community disagreed about climate change. ‘

Easily my favorite event of the convention, however, came on Thursday, when the AJAS delegates took a full-day tour of both Fermilab and the Argonne National Laboratory. From pi-shaped power poles to levitating superconductors, both labs were fascinating and extremely informative – just as I thought, leaving Fermilab, that I understood why particle accelerators were useful, we arrived at Argonne and witnessed a totally different use of the same basic technology. We also had the chance to have a “Breakfast with Scientists” one morning.

I was fortunate enough to sit at the table with Dr. Jonathan Haas, a curator at the Field Museum, who also gave us an introduction/tour of the new Americas exhibit. By allowing me to attend and present at the AJAS meeting this past February, the Minnesota Academy of Science provided me with a unique opportunity to meet with scientists from around the world, both high schoolers also attending and presenting at the Junior Academy meeting and AAAS members. Without the generous support of the Minnesota Academy of Science, I would never have been able to attend such an interesting, engaging event, and I am very grateful for the opportunity.

***By Madelaine Taft-Ferguson***

