

10A

## LIFESTYLES

## Chess gives girls chance to learn math

By Gestin Suttle  
THE NEWS TRIBUNE

TACOMA - Don't tell these girls that chess is a boy's game. "People don't think girls can play chess," said Jaime Briski, a Stewart Middle School sixth-grader. "We prove them wrong."

Briski and four of her schoolmates were among 22 girls from Washington who participated in the first-ever, all-girls interstate chess competition at the University of California at Berkeley recently. They competed in the Tournament of Queens against girls from Northern California - and won the overall state title.

Chess coach Nelson Hanton, who also is a math and science teacher at Stewart, thought up the idea of an all-girls chess championship because he found regular tournaments to be virtually all male - gap, too, he said.

Worse than that, he said, "I noticed that the interest level began to wane when they saw they were the only girls. I mean really, there were no middle school girls, only elementary school girls."

That mirrors what often happens to pre-teen girls, Hanton said. Many start off interested in math and science, but somewhere along the way to adulthood, they lose interest in the subjects.

Only 1 percent of the 80,000 members of the U.S. Chess Federation are female, he said.

Hanton also found that girls "were disrespected at tournaments. One boy would say (to another boy), 'Oh, you're lucky. You get to play a girl this round. What an easy match.'"

"My girls, they'd take it to heart," Hanton said.

Many girls didn't win the respect of their male peers even when they beat them, the girls said.

"It's amazing the excuses they'd make up - like, 'I stayed up late last night,'" said Cora Nelson, a quick-talking 11-year-old who bounces with every word she utters.

Boys just don't like playing girls because "they're too afraid of being teased" if they lose, said Jennifer McKeown, a quiet 11-year-old.

But in California, there were no excuses. Just hard-fought competition.

That in itself is valuable, the girls said.

"The first time you lose, you have to keep going and get better," said Christal Jones, 12.

All of the girls said they just started playing chess this school year.

At first, most did not think of chess as a girl's game - especially not for "cool" girls.

"I thought chess was only for geeks and stuff," said Jaime, a visual miniature of Sharon Stone - and definitely "not" a geek. "There's no girls playing chess in the movies," she explained.

But now, "it's like an addiction," Cora said.

The girls may not know it, but they are learning mathematics and scientific skills, Hanton said.

"We're using it as a tool to get girls involved in activities that are math-science related - especially at the middle school level," Hanton said.

The chess bug stayed with Mariana DeArmas, a Lincoln High School freshman who won fourth place overall at the competition - the highest of any of the girls from Tacoma.

She got into chess when she was in sixth grade, also at the prompting of Hanton.

The California competition was fun, she said, because "you get to play with people who are like you and (with whom) you have things in common."

Hanton said he and other coaches are working toward a national, all-girls meet.

## Dropout turns life around, earns associate degree

By Monica Mendoza  
THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

TUCSON, Ariz. - Darren Hensley sat in the bleachers of the Catalina High School football stadium and watched the class of 1988 turn their tassels and toss their graduation caps into the air. He should have been with them.

But lashing out at teachers, brawls with gang members and constantly skipping school kept

him from finishing high school with his class.

Fast forward to 1997: Hensley, now 26, led the Pima Community College class of 1,849 students in their commencement ceremony last week.

The young man who said he was called "a waste of taxpayers' money" by his high school assistant principal, was chosen to be the commencement student speaker.

He is an honor student listed on

the 1996 National Dean's List and in Who's Who Among Students in American Junior Colleges. He made the first team for the All-Arizona Academic Team. And he has a 4.0 grade point average. Hensley will receive an associate's degree in general education.

"In high school, I was very much afraid that he would never graduate," said his mother, Phyllis Fielder.

High school wasn't easy for

Hensley, who is described as a late bloomer by J.G. Carlton, retired Catalina High School journalism teacher.

"There was no doubt in my mind that Darren would ultimately realize his potential and make the most of it," Carlton said.

At the request of school officials, Hensley was transferred from Catalina to Sahuaro High School in his senior year. He went two days to the new school and

dropped out.

A year of burger-flipping ultimately had more influence on Hensley than his mother's pleadings about staying in school.

Hensley moved to Georgia with a family he met in church and went back to high school.

"I had to let him go," Fielder said. "No one understood why I did. I knew if he stayed he would end up in trouble."

Hensley went to school all day, See VET Page 11B

## Girl, 10, holds out for a transplant



PHOTOS/DIANNE V. CURTAIN

Above, Jessica Sanders, 10, cuddles her favorite bear. Below, with aunt and uncle, Michael and Dinessa Jackson. A patient at Carolinas Medical Center's Children's Hospital, Jessica is one of 1,800 children nationwide awaiting kidney transplants.

By Jeri Young  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Jessica Sanders' bedroom looks like any other 10-year-old's.

Twin princess beds covered with lavender quilts, stuffed animals and hundreds of dolls.

Jessica shares the room with her cousin and best friend LaRonica.

"I like this one," Jessica says, grabbing a large stuffed bear. "I don't know where I got him, but I like him."

Then she points to the large machine in the corner. That she doesn't like.

"It hooks up like this," she says, pointing to her stomach. A plastic tube is inserted there. "But it doesn't hurt. I don't like it. It's too cold."

Jessica suffers from end-stage renal disease, a debilitating illness that has destroyed her kidneys. The disease struck without warning three years ago. Now she sports a Tenckhoff catheter and spends each night hooked to the dialysis machine that drains toxic fluids from her body.

Jessica is one of several local children who will be featured Sunday during the Children's Miracle Network Champions Broadcast (12:40

p.m. WBTB Channel 3.)

She desperately needs a kidney transplant.

But she doesn't think about it.

For her life is normal.

She thinks about her boyfriend, a 9-year-old named Philip from church, school, a trip to Disney World. And LaRonica.

"She's my best friend," Jessica says proudly.

"She's my best friend, too," LaRonica says quietly. "I want her to get better."

Since taking Jessica and her three brothers in almost three years ago, life has been a challenge for Jessica's aunt, Dinessa Jackson. She and husband Michael have three children of their own.

"There are seven children here," Dinessa Jackson says with a laugh. "You just can't tell it now."

Dinessa Jackson didn't think too much about it when Jessica, always a sickly child, first became ill almost three years ago.

"She's been sick all her life," Jackson said. "She doesn't ever get thirsty. We always had to force her to drink stuff."

Jessica suffers from hypernatremia, a high sodium level that caused her to experience periodic seizures. So when

she came home from school complaining of a backache, Jackson didn't think too much of it.

"I thought it was just the same thing," she said.

As the evening wore on, Jessica's symptoms got worse.

"The teacher told me she was just laying around at school," Jackson said. "That wasn't like her. She told me she wouldn't eat or anything."

That night Jessica didn't feel any better. Her backache became worse. Jackson took her to the hospital. Fearing the worse, doctors did several blood tests.

"The doctor told me it came up real bad," Jackson said. "What it was showing was she was supposed to be dead. She was in the last stages of kidney failure. Neither one of her kidneys was working."

Jackson's initial reaction was shock.

"I was sad because she's so young," Jackson said. "I didn't want her to go through a lot of surgery and stuff."

Immediately, life changed for the family.

Jackson, who worked third shift as a nurse's assistant, was forced to quit her job. Jessica had to begin dialysis immediately. She spends at least 10 hours a day on the machine. Jackson had to be at

home to put her on the machine and take her off.

"It was just hard," Jackson says.

Jackson puts Jessica on the machine at 7 p.m. each night and takes her off at 6 a.m.

"I put her on later on the weekends and in the summer," Jackson says. "That way she gets to play a little longer and sleep in."

Jessica's disease has taken a toll on the family. Money is tight. Only Michael works and while Medicare takes care of most of the bills, the loss of Jackson's income has hurt. Things the couple did for themselves and for the children are more difficult to do.



## Thousands caught between Medicaid and private insurance

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CLINTON, Maine - Sheri Everitt was caught in the horns of a very painful dilemma: she was earning too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to buy their own health insurance.

She's not alone, state experts say. But that's little comfort to Everitt, who's still paying off a \$170 bill for a hospital visit and X-ray for her 6-year-old daughter.

"I felt awful about it, but I had to ask them not to prescribe one of

those new, expensive antibiotics because I couldn't afford that," the Clinton resident said.

State policy makers call it a major problem, but have been unable to agree on a solution.

Last year, the now defunct Maine Healthcare Reform Commission estimated more than 158,000 Maine residents were in the same predicament as Everitt, who lost her insurance three years ago when she left her husband.

Democrats have proposed dou-

bling the current 37-cent tobacco excise tax to fund expanded coverage for children under 19 whose family income is below 200 percent of the poverty level.

Analysts say such a move would provide coverage for about 30,000 more children.

But Gov. Angus King has threatened to veto such a plan. He wants to use any extra tobacco tax money for tax relief.

"It will be tragic if we end this session and we haven't passed this bill," said Senate Majority

Leader Chellie Pingree, D-North Haven.

Medicaid is a federally-funded state program that provides health insurance for poor and disabled residents. It currently covers about 156,000 people a month in Maine, including 75,000 children.

Francis Finnegan, Bureau of Medical Services director, said expanding Medicaid coverage through a dedicated tax may not be the best answer. Funding a program that will likely grow

more expensive with a tax revenue that could decline could present problems, he said.

Everitt, 34, says she has had a dull pain in her ovaries for more than a year. But when her doctor scheduled a sonogram last winter, she had to cancel because she couldn't afford it.

Meanwhile, she works between 40 and 45 hours a week at two part-time jobs. Everitt said she applied for Medicaid and welfare but found out she made \$30 a month too much to qualify.