

Democrat and Chronicle, Rochester, NY
May 28, 2003

**STUDENT MINDS HIS OWN BUSINESS WELL: IRONDEQUOIT JUNIOR'S
'VIRTUAL STORE' WINS NATIONAL COMPETITION'S FIRST PRIZE.**

BY STAFF WRITER
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When it comes to business acumen, Jim Mikel's got it.

The 16-year-old Irondequoit High School junior won first place earlier this month in a six-week national online business competition called the Virtual Business CyberCompetition.

The competition entailed using a computer simulation game to run a virtual convenience store.

"You had to pick your location on a map, pick your rent values and select products from bread and milk to shampoo, windshield wiper fluid and sunscreen," Jim said.

The software, created by Knowledge Matters Inc., allows business students to get hands-on experience without the real-dollar risk of operating an actual business, said Irondequoit High business teacher Lou DiCesare.

"The number of decisions that are built in are incredible," said DiCesare. "It's quite clever in terms of making our textbook come to life and in applying theories that are taught in the classroom."

Jim selected the site for his virtual store based on demographics and traffic patterns provided by the program. Once he had a virtual bank loan in place and his store's shelves filled, the real challenges began.

"Your competitors would go out and do price wars or send out coupons," he said. "That's hard. What do you do to try and keep up? Do you lower your prices and take the hit or keep prices the same?"

DiCesare said the competition brings fun to the classroom.

"I love it that students call it a game," he said. "It's really an incredible learning tool, but then again, business is sort of a game and the question is, who's going to win?"

For placing first in the competition – out of nearly 100 contestants from schools nationwide – with a virtual profit of more than \$60,000 after a virtual year of running the store, Jim received \$100. This was the second time this year Jim won the CyberCompetition.

The competitions are held three times a year, and are open to students in participating schools.

This was the first year Jim decided to take business courses in high school. But after completing DiCesare's Business Ownership and Marketing Class, he's ready for more.

"Now I found I have some talent for it, and the class was fund and I won some money," he said, adding that he's planning to take classes in international business next year.

Outside of his business classes, Jim is both an athlete and a scholar. He has been on the school's honor roll each year of high school and also is on the school's lacrosse and alpine ski teams.

He hasn't yet decided on a college.

"I'm looking around," he said. "I'm doing well in lacrosse and might be able to get some (scholarship) money for that, but I think I'm looking for a good business school. That's what I'd like to major in."

Jim lives with his parents, Dan and Mary Mikel; his brother John, a fifth-grader; and his sister Catelyn, who is in eighth grade.