**St. Clair Shores**

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**Clicking her way to success**

**By Kristyne E. Demske
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| Clicking her way to successPhoto by Deb JacquesChloe Jennings, a senior at Lake Shore High School, holds shoes she designed for a Vans Custom Culture contest that she is trying to win for the school’s art department.  |

Up until this year, 18-year-old Chloe Jennings knew she liked to draw, but she wasn’t quite sure how that talent would help her in the real world.

The senior at Lake Shore High School said it wasn’t until she took Tasha Candela’s advanced web design class that she realized her potential could actually be an online career in computer technology.

“Since I enjoyed it so much, I thought, just make it a career,” Jennings, of St. Clair Shores, said.

Her web design skills, together with her artistic abilities, have combined to earn her thousands of dollars in awards and scholarships, as well as a summer internship with Blue Cross Blue Shield. Jennings has been awarded a $500 scholarship from the St. Clair Shores Waterfront Committee, a $1,000 scholarship from Michigan First Credit Union, $500 to split with a partner from a web design contest through the Michigan Council of Women in Technology, and a $20,000 scholarship from that same organization.

She also got to go to a Detroit Tigers game at Comerica Park with her five siblings, parents and grandmother April 23 as the winner of the art division of the Jackie Robinson contest with a mixed-media piece depicting the nine values of the baseball great.

“She has an extreme knack just for manual drawing,” said Candela, the business and web design teacher at Lake Shore High school. “Her website was just so professional.”

It was at the Michigan Council of Women in Technology contest, where Jennings had to have her web design judged for code by 40 technology companies and make an oral presentation of the design to six female CEOs, that she realized what an asset the skills would be.

Networking during that presentation is what led to the summer internship that begins June 3 at Blue Cross Blue Shield headquarters.

Candela, Lake Shore High School’s Teacher of the Year for 2013, said her classes show students what careers technology has to offer.

“You really need to find something that’s marketable,” she said.

And Jennings has learned the lesson.

She will head to Michigan State University in the fall to double major in computer engineering and art, with a minor in media and communications. Participating in so many contests and scholarship competitions, she said, has made her more confident in the real world.

“She has now some concrete examples of what she’s doing is working,” Candela said. “She didn’t have that inner confidence.”

That isn’t a problem now.

“Stepping out of the bounds, it makes you stand out more, and people will take you more seriously,” Jennings said.

She hasn’t stopped working, either — two of Jennings’ designs were picked by her art class for a Vans Custom Culture shoe design contest that is currently being judged. The winners of that contest will receive money for the art program at their school.

Candela said the contests help inspire students and relate what they learn in the classroom to the real world.

“Technology, it’s ever-changing. The kids, they aren’t saying … ‘Slow down.’ They’ll take whatever I throw at them and use it to enhance core curriculum,” Candela said.

She began the web design program teaching HTML and CSS at the school five years ago; the classes are so popular that they now fill half her schedule.

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