

Elementary School Student Gets an Award for his Anime

By Sophie Braccini

The Parent Teacher Association 2007-2008 Reflections program inspired children in the Las Trampas Creek Council to create to illustrate the theme "I can make a difference by..." 421 students from Lafayette, Moraga and Walnut Creek participated in the contest. Of those, only ten reached the State level, where three got an Award of Merit: Two Las Lomas high school students and 5th grade student Michael Huang, for his animation video.

"I didn't expect to win anything," says the Camino Pablo Elementary student, "during the previous years my entries didn't go very far." His family has put his movie on Youtube, it can be seen at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZRmHFWp3C0>

Michael created his characters long ago, in the first grade. He started drawing them and making cartoons. There is eight year old Jack Frew, his brother Jeffrey who is five, his friend Tim Smith and the twins May and Ron who are eight as

well. "I guess Jack represents my more optimistic side," explains Huang, "Jeff is my silly side and Tim represent my wiser self." Huang drew many adventures for his characters, but when his mother, Teresa Chow, took a class in "Adobe Flash," the idea formed to animate the gang.

Chow taught her sons the basics of Flash, and Huang got a book to start learning more. "Flash is a good program for animations," says the young student, "you can draw each body part and Flash helps putting them together." Huang goes on explaining that Flash helps for simple movements, motions and transitions but for other elements each frame has to be done individually. "Puffs of smoke, flames take a really long time to make."

The 2½-minute movie Huang created for the Reflections program took him 3 ½ months to develop, working almost every day for 1½ hours. "I started working on the film in



Michael Huang at his computer

Photo Teresa Chow

July," says Wang, "the idea came to me as the right thing to do." Huang says that he started with the animating right away, he didn't write the story, just jotted down some ideas. The family helped by creating the voices of the characters. "I want to thank my family," says Huang, "everybody helped with the voices. My dad had a line he loved: 'Do you need help cleaning up?' Of course it doesn't

sound like him because I distorted his voice to make it sound like a child's." His twin brother Cary helped with the music.

Michael is now getting ready to go to middle school and has started working on his next year's Reflections entry. The theme is "Wow!" No doubt it will inspire him and many other students to design interesting projects