

DECA *Student Achievers Link With Community*

By **SUSAN M. DYCKMAN**
Specially Written for Our Town

For 28 years, the student members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) Chapter of the Distributive Education Club of America (DECA) have served the needs of their hometowns and adjacent communities while developing their own organizational, leadership, communication and marketing skills through hands-on experience.

According to Rianna Liss, a DECA member who graduated from SPFHS this year, "A lot of people don't realize how large this need is so close to home."

DECA draws students who are interested in marketing or those eager to pursue a business-related program of study in college. The club, which included 80 members in 1997-1998, also offers students an opportunity for significant involvement in different aspects of community service.

The DECA experience is three-fold. It blends marketing classes, after-school employment and club membership in a well-rounded program allowing students to put marketing theory into practice.

In addition to calling upon students to organize a unique variety of community activities, DECA enables members to participate in regional, state, and national competitions.

Competition among DECA chapters tests students' proficiency in management skills, marketing theory and conducting market research projects - skills learned in the classroom and implemented on the job.

The local DECA chapter has enjoyed state and national recognition for its far-reaching involvement in the community. All of its activities are designed as a way for students to "give something back."



FRIENDS OF BUSINESS...Members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA, an association of marketing students, present Ray Pardon, President of the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association (SPBPA), with an Honorary Lifetime Membership Award. The DECA students collaborated with the SPBPA on a 1997 Business and Service Directory. Pictured, left to right, are: Adam Baumwoll, Jeffrey Gillie, Adam Koster, Mr. Pardon and David Gewirtz.

This year, 33 students from SPFHS competed at the national conference in Denver, Colorado, garnering an unprecedented four awards from the national chapter.

Rianna, along with classmates Jordan Eannucci and Nicole Troiano and then-freshman David Bell, placed among the top eight teams in the country for a public relations project. The project included organizing activities for homeless families in Union County.

Jordan, Rianna, recent graduate Suzanne Lamastra and then-freshman Tony Giacac also finished in the top eight for a market research project on Gap Kids of Westfield.

Rianna additionally earned an individual award in the management competency division of the "Apparel and Accessories" category.

Two other members of the Class of 1998, Adam Koster and Dan Morris, were awarded honorable mention for their market research entry on the Florence Ravioli food store in Scotch Plains.

Rianna, who is currently studying elementary education at Rider College in Lawrenceville, said her DECA experience helped her to "become a good leader, work with a group, and learn how to communicate effectively with peers ranging in age from freshmen to seniors, and with people whose lives are very different from mine."

She noted that, through DECA, "I also learned how to manage my time." In addition to DECA demands, schoolwork, sports and other club activities, Rianna worked 15 hours per week at Gap Kids.

She said she is confident that the business etiquette skills she acquired during her three years as a DECA member will help her interview successfully for a "real job" someday.

"We worked on résumés and job applications," she said. "I learned how to do it right."

The fact that so many DECA students learned

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