



Woodstock Community Unit School District 200

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Contact: Kevin Lyons

815.337.3071

Woodstock North grad interns for NASA

A 2021 Woodstock North High School graduate is spending the next several months working with NASA helping design rechargeable batteries for aerospace use.

Jason Packard, an undergraduate student at Purdue University, began his internship at Langley Research Center in Hampton, VA. in January and said he's excited about the research he's been conducting along with fellow interns from Cornell University and the University of Texas among other schools.

Packard is working under the guidance of Dr. Yi Lin, who earned the NASA Exceptional Technology Achievement Medal in 2017.

"It's really cool being around a lot of smart, friendly people like my mentor and to work on projects that will have a big impact," Packard said.

While in West Lafayette, Packard initially applied for a different NASA internship, but a NASA representative recognized the applicability of high-energy power storage research that Packard was conducting in the ViPER lab at Purdue, within his department of Chemical Engineering.

Packard and his team are working on the SABERS program — Solid-state Architecture Batteries for Enhanced Rechargeability and Safety. Current lithium-ion batteries operate with liquid electrolytes, which is a challenge at high and low temperatures, critical for aerospace applications.

Packard, who was an Illinois State Scholar, peer tutor and tennis player at WNHS, mentioned two North teachers who inspired his passion for math and science: Bart Zadlo and Jillian Barry.

"Ms. Barry really got me into science. She went above and beyond to get students interested," Packard said.

As for Zadlo, Packard said he was an outstanding math teacher. "I definitely felt prepared for college because he really knew calculus. It wasn't a big jump for me in college."

Barry said she was pleased to hear about Packard's academic career.

"Jason was a fantastic AP science student at North with exceptional analytical thinking skills. I am so excited to see him continuing to pursue a career within the STEM field," she said.

Zadlo said Packard left a lasting impression at North and wished him the best in the future.

"I am very glad to hear what he has accomplished and I am confident that the best is yet to come," Zadlo said.

Packard expects to earn his undergraduate degree in 2025 and said he plans to eventually work toward a doctorate degree, hopefully in the Silicon Valley area.