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FIVE THINGS: About a valedictorian

June 3, 2007

BY EMILIANA SANDOVAL
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Simona Morhan is graduating from Chadsey High School in Detroit at the top of her class.

BRIEF BIO

Morhan grew up about 4,900 miles away. She moved to Detroit from a village near Suceava, Romania, when she was in ninth grade. She's 17 and lives in Detroit with her parents, Zorica and Pasile. She's the youngest of eight children.

FAR AWAY

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One of her brothers came to Detroit first, and she and her parents followed. At the time she had some English skills but wasn't fluent.

"I could understand it, but it was hard to speak it," she said. "I took some ESL classes to learn it."

Now she's trilingual: English, Romanian and Ukrainian.

"The part of Romania I come from used to be in the Ukraine."

She's soft-spoken and barely has an accent.

AT SCHOOL

Morhan has a 4.0 grade-point average. She likes Chadsey because it's diverse, and she said the teachers are nice.

She is in school half the day, then goes to work at Supreme Baking Co., where her mother also works.

Last summer she was chosen for a summer science program run by the Harlem Children Society. She spent three days a week at the University Health Center in Detroit, observing doctors and doing experiments. She wrote an abstract about oxidative stress and diabetes.

"Oxidative stress happens in your blood. It's the overproduction of free radicals," she said.

AT HOME

When Morhan isn't studying or working or at school, she likes reading the Bible. She's involved with her church, Bethel Romanian Pentecostal.

WHAT'S NEXT

Morhan doesn't have any summer plans besides working and getting ready for college. She'll attend the University of Detroit Mercy, where she'll study premed.

"I want to be a radiologist or maybe a pediatrician. I don't want to live in Detroit. Maybe Arizona -- I visited my friend there and it was nice."

First she'll have to make her valedictorian speech at Chadsey's June 14 graduation. She's still thinking about what

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Simona came to this country just a few years ago. She's planning to become a doctor.

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she'll say.

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Unnecessary Evil

The term "valedictorian" doesn't carry the same weight as it once did. I noticed that most of these high schools have multiple-valedictorians. I believe I saw one with about twenty last year or the year before. This goes back to "grade inflation" and "keeping the customer satisfied."

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