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What's on youths' minds? Ask Livermore teen

LIVERMORE — A Livermore High School senior got a taste of the national spotlight earlier this month when he participated in the State of Our Nation's Youth news conference in Washington, D.C.

David Miller, 17, answered questions from reporters regarding his views and the views of his peers. The panel of six students fielded questions on topics ranging from global warming to cyber-bullying.

The other panelists were from Florida, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia.

"It was really cool," Miller said. "There were a bunch of media people there."

The State of Our Nation's Youth panel is put together by the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, and uses survey results from Peter D. Hart Research Associates of Washington to determine which issues affect young Americans, and which issues young Americans find most important.

Surprisingly, young adults and their older counterparts see eye-to-eye on most issues. Both consider the economy the most important issue facing the nation in the upcoming presidential election.

"Issues that students worry about are exactly the same as those worried about by adults," Miller said of the survey's results, adding the only major difference is that students consider the environment a higher priority.

The survey also revealed a significant drop in students' optimism on the nation's direction.

"While it is still true that a majority of teens are optimistic,

53 percent serves as a significant drop," Allan Rivlin, a partner with Peter D. Hart Research Associates, said. In 2003, 75 percent of youths were optimistic, he said.

Miller, who was recommended for the panel by Livermore High's vice principal, Ron Nicola, is involved in the school's debate and hiking clubs, as well as Club Interact, an organization that coordinates community activities around Livermore High.

According to the Alger Association's Web site, Miller is interested in current affairs and enjoys writing articles for his journalism class.

about Israel and Palestine, from which he recently returned after visiting on a mission trip. Miller hopes to one day become a U.S. senator, the site said.