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SPORTS FINAL

## Shelton a part of shuttle history



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**SHELTON** — Students in an advanced placement biology class at Shelton High School, their teachers and parents cheered Monday morning as they watched the shuttle Endeavour lift off into space for the last time.

That's because their experiment,

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"Development of Prokaryotic Cell Walls in a Microgravity Environment," is part of the payload.

It is one of only 16 experiments nationwide to be selected to go on the shuttle.

The experiment is testing how bacterial cell walls develop in a microgravity environment. Students hope to determine

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## Shelton: Experiment blasts off into history

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increased susceptibility of astronauts to bacterial infection on returning to space.

Headmaster Beth Smith was all smiles as she gave each of the students involved a "high five" and congratulated them on their success.

Smith had accompanied students and staff members last month to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida to watch the liftoff of the final flight of the STS-134 mission. But that launch was scrubbed because of fuel line problems.

Shelton is the only district in Connecticut selected to participate in the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program.

The group was led by science teacher Mary Clark and Tina Henckel, assistant director of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) for the Shelton school district.

Clark said, "We look forward to analyzing the results" after the 16-day mission. She also said she



Photo courtesy Shelton Public Schools

Shelton High students work on an experiment that is now aboard the space shuttle Endeavour.

was glad everyone was able to watch the liftoff together. "The students worked very hard and they're very deserving," Clark said.

Henckel said work on the experiment started in August. "It was strictly volunteer," she said.

Senior Omar Sobh, one of five students who worked on the experiment, said while they were

in Florida, students were able to meet with NASA engineers and learn about internships that are available.

The team, their teachers and parents had "an unobstructed view" from Kars Park of what would have been the April take-off, Sobh said. He said the experience was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for all of them.

The other students who worked on the experiment are Leann Misencik, Kayla Russo, Jason Shnipes and Jimmy Szabo.

Sobh's parents, Tarek M. Sobh, dean of the School of Engineering at the University of Bridgeport, and Nihal Sobh, were among other proud parents who joined students in the classroom to watch the launch.

"We're incredibly excited," Tarek Sobh said. "And we are very, very proud, not just of (Omar) but of all of them. Renowned scientists would give years of their life to have their experiment (go up) on the shuttle."

Nihal Sobh commended Smith. "Without her support, the kids would not be able to do this," she said. "She has been so supportive."

Junior Jessica Olavarria also received recognition Monday. Her artwork was selected to accompany the experiment. She said she was happy because the emblem she created, featuring a Shelton Gael, was selected by a vote of the student body.

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