

STATE / page 5 MediaNews CEO takes control of chain



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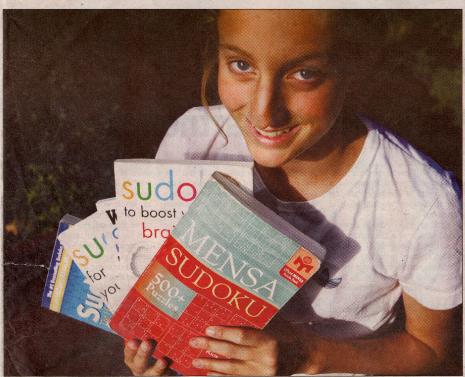


SPORTS / page 65 Goaaal! World Cup coverage and highlights

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Todd E. Swenson / Daily News

**WHIZ KID** — Juliana Walton, 13, an eighth-grader from Blach Intermediate in Los Altos, has mastered the Sudoku puzzles. Walton is the 2006 MathEdge Sudoku Tournament champion.

## A puzzling skill: Local teen rules at Sudoku tournan

BY LUKE STANGEL

There's no secret to how Juliana Walton solves Sudoku puzzles. The 13-year-old math whiz from Los Altos gets a fresh puzzle, takes one look at it and the numbers start popping out. Fast.

Fast enough to beat a field of 50 adult Sudoku fanatics at a recent competition at the Exploratorium in San Francisco, including a man who writes Scrabble puzzles for a living.

"It comes naturally to me," Walton said in an interview Saturday. "I really don't understand how it doesn't come naturally to other people.'

Sudoku, if you haven't heard of it already, is a Japanese numbers puzzle with 81 squares - nine squares across and nine squares down. The 81 squares are further broken into six smaller 3x3 boxes

The object of the puzzle is to place

## Walton's Sudoku Tips:

· When you're just starting out, finish easy puzzles to learn the fundamentals. Move on to harder puzzles as your skills improve.

· Look for the rows, columns and 3x3 boxes with the most numbers, as you are most likely to discover the numbers you need there.

· If you get stuck, look at elimination through association. For example, if you know two horizontal squares in a 3x3 box need to be a one or a five, you can eliminate the ones and fives in the rest of the row. And finally, "have fun and don't get stressed. If you get stressed, it

kind of makes it harder.

The object of the puzzle is to place nine in each vertical column and

horizontal row, numbers one through nine in each vertical column and

numbers one through nine in each

numbers one through nine in each smaller, 3x3 box. No duplicates allowed

Anywhere from 20 to 30 numbers are provided to you when you start, and you then fill in the remaining

blank squares. Confused yet?
Walton has been finishing 20 to 30 Sudoku puzzles a day since August, when her algebra teacher, Marcia Chron, first introduced her to it.

"Well, I didn't really understand what they were saying at first, but once I understood what I had to do, I got it right away and found it really easy," Walton said.

In the last year, she's devoured Sudoku puzzle after Sudoku puzzle, finishing 52 Mensa-level puzzles in 10 hours one day.

Walton has exceptional spatial skills - the ability to look at fragmented pieces of information and

See SUDOKU, page 10

See SUDOKU, page 10

## **Rural fire station** staffing at risk in budget cuts

Residents, 2 council members want to keep firefighters there

At a glance

What: Palo Alto City Council

Where: Council Chambers, 250

"I think I might want to try some more tournaments, to see what kind of people

"I think I might want

re," Walton said. Reach Luke Stangel at

meeting. When: Monday at 7 p.m.

Hamilton Ave.

pood

BY LUKE STANGEL

for

As Palo Alto finalizes its budget for the coming year, two council members and a group of residents living in rural Palo Alto

will try to convince the city to Foc tion yea

rong. She erased again from the 0 minutes to finove done the entire puzzle wrong. ish and she sat back as the finalists, including the Sc struggled without success. insi Fire fight the everything and

tournaments, Walton never Walton won a family membership Exploratorium and a backpack full the Exploratorium and a backpack puzzles

of OL competi-·H

In three rounds of two decades older than me' finished each puzzle faster adults whom she called ents signed her up She wanted to tion last weekend accurately than ar This included

to

parents were

skills

spatial form them

Sunday, June 11, 2006

were no instructions, and Walton came to the last square only to find she had a worldwide Sudoku when she was an ated toward puzzle n together before she ner 3-year-old sister is getting good Sudoku for kids, placing "Dora t Explorer" stickers in the boxes inste-Walton is the eldest of four and founger sister getting started intant and gravitated toward pieces, putting them together be could speak.

r first Sudoku tour-

ed her f

Walton entered h