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## For the Love of Learning: Campolindo Wins National Academic Decathlon Competition

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Council member Phil Arth with Campolindo's winning team members, Brian Lederman, Vikram Bhadvri, Christoph Steefel, Zach Scherer, Evelyn Steffel, Mayor Dave Trotter, Laura Gustafson, Tristan Caso, Marina Han, Graham Wade, Coach Paul Verbansky and Council member Ken Chew (Council member Michael Metcalf behind Graham Wade). Photo Andy Scheck

beyond the simple memorization of facts. "We go into a lot of depth on each subject," she said. "We have to do comparative and analytical studies, write essays and make oral presentations." She believes that all the training she received helped her with the college application process.

Anyone can join the club, which involves students from grades 9-12 and is supported by teacher Paul Verbanszky. The Campolindo Academic Decathlon team that represented the State of California in the medium-sized school division at Nationals also collected 31 individual medals in all subjects.

Talk about bragging rights! For the first time, a Northern California high school won the United States Academic Decathlon Competition in the medium-sized school category, and this amazing victory was snatched with panache by no other than the Campolindo High School team. The Moraga Town Council declared May 22 "Campolindo High School Academic Decathlon Team Day" in the town of Moraga.

"We were very happy and proud to get this proclamation," commented Laura Gustafson (co-captain with Evelyn Steefel) after the ceremony. The Academic Decathlon is a club activity at Campolindo. The students meet after class during the year, and also during weekends as the competition nears. There are about 20 students in the club, and nine are part of the competing team.

Interestingly, the nine competitors cannot all be straight-A students. "Three of them are in the honors group with an un-weighted GPA of 3.75 and higher, three have a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and three have a GPA below 3.0," explained Gustafson.

"Those who do [the decathlon], do it for the love of learning," she said. "I've been with the club since my freshman year and have learned a lot about a lot of subjects that sometimes weren't even studied in class." The 10 Academic Decathlon subjects are art, economics, essay, interview, language and literature, mathematics, music, science, social studies and speech, which all revolved around this year's theme: Russia.

Gustafson appreciates how the competition goes

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