

Published June 19th, 2013

Three Lamorinda Odyssey of the Mind Teams Place in Top 20 at World Finals

By Sophie Braccini

MORAGA



Moraga Rotary Club Team C members show off medals won at the Odyssey of the Mind state championships. From left, Coach Omid Boozarpour, Jake Oxendine, Meera Ramesh, Maya Ramesh, Anshula Srivastava, Navid Boozarpour, Austen Li, and Ming Qian.

school when Lydia Oxendine, Fei Lin and Diana Boozarpour heard about the program, talked about it and proposed it to their children. The group as it is today assembled in sixth grade and has competed for three years. They've always done well, but this was their first appearance at the World Finals in their age category.

"This year our project was really creative and out of the box," says Navid. "We competed in the category called 'ARTchitecture: The Musical' and invented a flipping backdrop for our performance."

Each team faced unique challenges in the competition. For example, the JM team had to imagine, construct and execute a performance that included a replica of an existing ancient monument. The performance had to include three works of art that "disappeared" and two characters that went on a quest to find them. The performance also included two songs that were accompanied by some type of dance.

"We were very strong in the creation of the replica of Chichen Itza, of the artifacts and the general scenario," says Austen.

"One of the high quality things that we did was the acting," adds Jake, "acting, singing and dancing."

They also credited their great results this year to their coach, Omid Boozarpour - a senior at Campolindo and former Odyssey participant himself - for the way he challenged them to think creatively. "The coach is there to encourage [the team], ask questions and push them to do their best," says Boozarpour. "He cannot make any suggestions."

Odyssey of the Mind is a truly multi-disciplinary challenge that teams work on months in advance of the competitions. Bringing props, materials and performing are not the teams' only challenges. During the competition, teams are given spontaneous problems they have to solve by themselves within a few minutes. For example, making as many bundles as possible of random objects with a small amount of string within three minutes, or inventing a story that has to integrate toothpicks.

Working as a team and trusting each other is a large part of what students learn.

There are many Odyssey of the Mind teams in Lamorinda but, according to the parents, what they need most are volunteer coaches so the program can expand even more. To learn more about Odyssey of the Mind, visit www.odysseyofthemind.com/learn_more.php.

Inside the Breslin Student Events Center at Michigan State University, 827 teams from 13 countries and 33 U.S. states filled the huge arena parading for the opening ceremony of the 2013 Odyssey of the Mind World Finals. Young people from countries such as Japan, Poland, China and Germany displayed their pride with boisterous enthusiasm using bright costumes, props, banners and noisemakers, as the spectators - mostly adoring family-fans - cheered.

"It was like the opening ceremony at the Olympics," says Fei Lin, mother of one of the members of the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School team - one of three Lamorinda teams representing California that placed in the top 20 for their divisions at the competition. "There were fireworks, teams from all over the world. It was an amazing time for our children."

Then the competition started. Stanley Middle School's team placed 8th in its division for the problem "It's How You Look At It," Glorietta Elementary School's fifth-grade team placed 16th in its division for the "Tumble-wood" problem, and the Moraga team comprised of seven eighth-graders, sponsored by Moraga Rotary, tied for 12th place with Singapore's Saint Margaret's Secondary School and the International School of Geneva.

For JM team members Navid Boozarpour, Austen Li, Jake Oxendine, Ming Qian, Maya Ramesh, Meera Ramesh, and Anshula Srivastava, the voyage started in elementary

LAFAYETTE



For the second time in a row, Stanley Middle School's Odyssey of the Mind team, coached by Tina Edraki and Ian Kallen, attended the World Finals. From left: seventh-graders Theresa Nevins, Aneesa Edraki, Alex Keppel, Gigi Keppel and Trevor Patton, and eighth-graders Amin Edraki and Jonah Kallen (seated).

ORINDA



Glorietta Elementary School's fifth-grade Odyssey of the Mind team, Sullivan Jordan, Stephanie Wu, Leah Sopak, Caroline Kim, Sarah Inouye, and Coach Michael Kim, sport California state caps prior to the World Finals award ceremony. Photos provided



Moraga Rotary team competing at the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals. Front row, from left: Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School students Austen Li, Jake Oxendine, Navid Boozarpour; back row: Maya Ramesh, Meera Ramesh, Ming Qian, Anshula Srivastava, and coach Omid Boozarpour. Photo provided

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA