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## Miramonte Public Speaking Wins Top 10 in the Nation!

*Submitted by Cecelia Andrews*



Back row, from left: Kristen Plant, Charles Hinman, Cecelia Andrews, Caie Kelley, Fatima Hasanain, Asher Kalman, and Bennett Stehr; front row: Alex Jang, Connor Meckfessel, Ethan Miles, Noah Goldstein, and Sandra Maguire. Photo Gloria Jang

S. Congress. Stehr will attend Georgetown University's renowned School of Foreign Service next fall. "I was most inspired when the chair of Congressional Debate pointed out that America is the greatest country in the world, not because here everything is perfect, but because here anything is possible," noted Stehr. In an outstanding culmination of his high school competitive career, California state champion Meckfessel placed in the top five for the third year in a row, earning second place in the country, and solidifying his legacy as one of the most successful Congressional Debaters in the Miramonte program's rich 35 year history.

Because Miramonte was so successful in both speech and debate events, the school was awarded the tournament's highest honor of School of Outstanding Distinction as one of the top 10 schools out of the over 1,000 schools who qualified to compete at nationals. As much as the students and coaches worked hard to achieve this goal, the program would not be possible without the generous support of the Educational Foundation of Orinda. EFO's sponsorship of specialized coaches, state-of-the-art resources and technology, and highest-level competitions allows the voices of the 220 students enrolled in Miramonte's program to be heard. Kalman and Meckfessel have earned debate scholarships to Lewis and Clark College, where they will be roommates and Parliamentary Debate partners. Rising senior Alexander Jang commented, "The week we spent in Kansas was one of the most challenging experiences I've ever had, but I'm also incredibly happy with what we accomplished. I proved that I can debate well, but I also learned a lot about how I can get better."

While many high school students enjoyed their first swims of the summer, Miramonte public speaking teacher and head coach Kristen Plant flew with 10 of her top competitors to the 84th annual National Speech and Debate Association National Tournament in Overland Park, Kan. From June 16-20, these talented Matadors competed alongside over 3,300 students in the largest academic competition in the world, participating in a variety of events ranging from persuasive oratory-style speech to intense two-vs-two debate. Although Miramonte had a lot to prove after placing in the top 10 schools in the country last year, the team exceeded all expectations with their incredible success.

With the help of teachers and coaches Plant and Franck Reyherme, as well as retired coach and six-time Diamond Award winner coach Sandra Maguire, graduated seniors Noah Goldstein, Connor Meckfessel, Ethan Miles, and Bennett Stehr continued Miramonte's tradition of excellence in Congressional Debate, an event in which students debate legislation in a format similar to the actual U.

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