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Five Moraga Odyssey of the Mind teams advance to state championships

Submitted by Rich Render



Moraga Rotary's Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School eighth-grade Odyssey of the Mind team advances to the state championship. From left: Madison Lee, Amrita Malhotra, Jacqui Huebner, Caroline Botsford, Olivia House, Daniel Granicher, and Marshall Franklin. Photo provided

goes to the world championships held in the Mid-West in June.

First-time coach Irene Jai of a new grade 3-5 team said, "None of us knew what to expect on competition day at Concord High School. Walking through the school hallways, it was thrilling and impressive to see all the unique backdrops, props, costumes and makeup. We watched an entertaining classmates' performance on the Mockumentary Problem, where they recapped at the end with an original rap song. Our problem was the Structure Performance Problem, where you construct a flimsy balsa wood structure that weighs no more than 15 grams, and compete to hold the most weight before collapsing. We were amazed by the Moraga team A whose structure held 755 pounds, winning first place. Our team did not advance to state, but success was defined by surpassing all our expectations, improving by leaps and bounds, and working out team conflicts respectfully."

"What I found to be most successful was the community bonding in our Moraga Rotary teams. The anchors are Reena Malhotra and her son Aman who is the Student Leader for Rotary. They supported each team by sharing valuable information from the get go and stopping by each performance to cheer for the Moraga teams. Whether your child likes to perform, build, design, draw, write, laugh, or entertain, Odyssey of the Mind is a boundless platform for solving problems using their own ideas."

Coach Cynthia Granicher of an eighth-grade team said, "The competition day was filled with nervousness and excitement and literal thunderstorms with rain and hail, but nothing could deter our team. They were all positive and supportive and continued to think of ideas to improve their performance. Two of the favorite comments from the judges were on ideas that the team came up with in the car on the way to the tournament. When their team name was called for the first place spot, the team went wild and the parents were happily shocked. It was an excellent day with all parents in attendance to lend their support and the team leaving with an immense feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment for the work and time they put into their performance. This is our second time in the past three years advancing to the state competition, and we are hoping we can make it to the world competition this time."

Several other Lamorinda teams from Orinda Rotary, Orinda Intermediate School, Burton Valley, Lafayette and Glorietta elementary schools also advanced to the state competition.

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