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MEDIA ADVISORY

Science Olympiad Students from Texas Invited to White House Science Fair in Washington, DC

Oakbrook Terrace, IL — Two outstanding Science Olympiad competitors from Beckendorff Junior High School in Katy, TX, will attend the 5th Annual White House Science Fair hosted by President Barack Obama, an event highlighting the achievements of students from major national science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) competitions, on Monday, March 23, 2015. This is the sixth time Science Olympiad has been lauded by a sitting president; in March of 1992, President George H.W. Bush and Education Secretary Lamar Alexander hosted 180 Science Olympiad dignitaries and students at a Washington, DC ceremony; in October 2010, February 2012, April 2013 and May 2014, Science Olympiad students and coaches attended President Obama's annual White House Science Fairs.

Science Olympiad is a Chicago-area based, national non-profit organization founded in 1984 dedicated to improving the quality of K-12 STEM education, increasing male, female and minority interest in science, creating a technologically literate workforce and providing recognition for outstanding achievement by both students and teachers. More than 210,000 students and 30,000 teachers on 7,300 teams from all 50 states competed in 380 regional, state and national Science Olympiad tournaments last year. A signature program started in 2007, the Science Olympiad Urban Schools Initiative, provides schools with minority enrollment the additional training and resources needed for students and teachers to succeed in Science Olympiad's hands-on STEM competitions.

“For the past 31 years, Science Olympiad has allowed students to discover their passion and apply their skills in a team setting,” said Dr. Gerard Putz, president and co-founder of Science Olympiad. “With hands-on STEM events that cover biology, chemistry, engineering, astronomy, epidemiology and robotics, Science Olympiad often leads our participants to choose college majors and careers in science and technology.”

Background

Students at the White House event were both on the Beckendorff JHS Science Olympiad team, which took top honors against 59 other Division B middle schools at the 30th Annual 2014 Science Olympiad National Tournament. Heather Sweeney placed in the top six in the nation in events such as Water Quality, Crime Busters, Heredity and Can't Judge A Powder. She plans to pursue a career in biomedical engineering, and states, “Science Olympiad taught me that our scientists, engineers and innovators save lives and change the world. I want to make a difference.” Erik Yu, national champion in both the Wheeled Vehicle and Robo-Cross events as well as medalist in Simple Machines and Write It Do It, is aiming for an electrical engineering/computer science degree. He credits Science Olympiad with teaching him leadership, diligence and the value of hard work. Scott Lightle, a veteran Science Olympiad coach and Concepts of Engineering instructor, was honored with the Beckendorff JHS Teacher of the Year Award in February 2015. Accompanying the group is Beckendorff JHS Principal Mindy Dickerson.

“Science Olympiad provides our students with unparalleled experiences which enrich their educational, as well as personal, growth,” said Principal Dickerson. “The commitment to keep learning, spirit of competition and display of teamwork are evident in each event across all teams. It is such a pleasure to watch students work together while growing as individuals through the Science Olympiad program.”

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