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Mason comes in 2nd at national Science Olympiad

By SUE KIESEWETTER

MASON – Student Emily Fang has set a lofty goal for Mason High School’s Science Olympiad Team: Become the nation’s top team at next spring’s national competition.

And after placing second in the nation last month at the team’s first-ever national appearance,

Fang believes it is an achievable goal. The team competed in the 2018 Science Olympiad National Tournament, Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado.

“We’re more hopeful than ever,” said Fang, an incoming senior and a team captain who began competing in middle school.

“We know we’re capable of it. We definitely want to win now.”

The team placed first in Ohio this year qualifying it for the national competition. It is the first time a Cincinnati-area team ever competed nationally, said Aimee Hansen, a chemistry teacher and team adviser.

“Last year they were third in the state – two points away from nationals with only the top two state teams going to national competition,” Hansen said.

“The kids were heartbroken. They came back with a vengeance. This team has tenacity, perseverance – and a little bit of grit.”

About 100 students are involved with Science Olympiad, up from six when the team was first formed 15 years ago, Hansen said.



The Mason High School Science Olympiad Team won national competition. From left are: top, Richard Liu, Kevin Zhu, Nolan Song, Alan Guo, Daniel Xu, Suhas Kolli, Jeffrey Huang and Wei Gao. Bottom, Terry Huang, Kevin Ren, Alisa Zhang, Jenny Hong, Emily Fang, Alex Wang, Alyson Lam, Ranjani Ramasubramanian, Jenny Wan and Jack Li. (Photo: Provided photo)

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Only one team of 15 is allowed to compete at the state and national competitions. It is up to the team to select members for those competitions, with only seven seniors allowed on the teams.

This year the team competed in five invitationals, a regional, state and national competition. The team competes in 23 different events in all areas of science.

At invitationals, the school can enter more than one team, allowing more students to get experience competing.

Secrets to science team's success

“The group bonded and gelled – they were a real team. These kids write tests for each other, they hold mock invitationals,” Hansen said.

“It’s hard to pick the top 15 who would be good in 23 events. They’re all brilliant – taking Advanced Placement courses, getting perfect scores.”

The team was so dedicated that the seven seniors missed graduation to compete at nationals.

“They have lived and breathed the Science Olympiad – some for the last four years – or longer,” Hansen said.

For the first time, the team opted to try for a spot at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology invitational so they would face tough competition, Hansen said.

“The whole purpose of going to MIT was seeing how we might do at nationals – there would be stiffer competition and it would be more challenging,” Hansen explained.

Fang said she – like many of her teammates – is constantly reading science material outside the classroom to prepare for the olympiads. Her specialties are earth and space science.

Varied interests of budding scientists make team strong

Others are good in different areas, she said, adding that’s what makes the team strong.

Fang and some of her teammates will continue to prepare for next season’s competition. In August they will receive rules for the 2018-2019 competition.

“I enjoy the team atmosphere – having them root for me, me being invested in them,” Fang said.

Each year the competition includes some kind of building exercise. This year they built a tower, had a helicopter event and made a mouse trap.

“A couple events are the same each year and there are always new events,” Hansen said.

The team members that competed at the state and national level this year were: Alyson Lam, Alex Wang, Jenny Hong, Emily Fang, Allen Yang, Alisa Zhang, Daniel Xu, Terry Luo, Ranjani Ramasubramanian, Richard Liu, Jenny Wan, Jeffrey Huang and Jack Li.

