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PRESS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Students Display STEM Skills at Tri-County Science and Engineering Fair

FONTANA, CA – A commitment to protecting the environment has brought recognition to five Kaiser High School students, whose science projects earned them gold medals at the SIM Science and Engineering Fair, held April 3 at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana.

Kaiser High senior Abraham Rubalcava and junior Jashandeep Lobana investigated how to reclaim lead from wild plants in their project, “Phytoremediation of Lead through Arabidopsis Thaliana.” In addition to the gold medal, the project earned them the Community Award and a \$1,000 check from the Professional Engineers of California Government (PECG) to further their education in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.

The pair were joined by Kaiser classmates, juniors Lesley Bedolla and Daniela Flores and sophomore Vincent Wongsuchit, who received a gold medal for their project, “Healing the World One Shrimp at a Time.” The winning projects will advance to the California Science and Engineering Fair at the California Science Center in Los Angeles on April 23-24.

“This is a great honor. We faced tremendous competition and weren’t expecting to win the gold medal,” Lobana said. “Abraham and I have been working on this project for over a year and our work is not complete. The Community Award will help us continue our research and prepare us for the rigors of higher education.”

Sequoia Middle School seventh-grader Naomi Palacios earned a silver medal, while Sequoia seventh-grader Catherine Carrera and Dorothy Grant Elementary fifth-grader Thomas Costa and fourth-grader Scarlet Shampine received bronze medals for individual projects.

The SIM Science and Engineering Fair is an annual tri-county competition that showcases K-12 STEM projects from San Bernardino, Inyo and Mono counties. More than 450 students – including 21 from Fontana Unified – designed, developed and displayed science and engineering projects for the SIM Fair. Judges critiqued the projects for qualities including scientific, method, content, clarity of presentation, and originality.

“Since the adoption of Next Generation science standards in 2013, Fontana Unified has placed greater emphasis on STEM education, encouraging our students to pursue opportunities to display their knowledge,” Fontana Unified STEM Coordinator Leonard Fisher said. “We are seeing improvements at every grade level, as our students adapt to using critical thinking and collaborative learning to identify and solve problems.”

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Rubalcava and Lobana, who earned a silver medal at the 2017 SIM Fair for their “Phytoremediation” project, decided they needed additional resources for this year’s fair. The pair enlisted the help of UC Riverside Center for Plant Cell Biology Director Dr. Patricia Springer and two Ph.D. candidates to bolster their research.

The extra effort was rewarded at the 2018 SIM Fair after their presentation caught the eye of a PECG environmental engineer, who was impressed that their project included potential uses for the lead once it was extracted from the plants.

“In order for the students of today to grow into the leaders of tomorrow, they need access to the latest technology and world class instructors,” Fontana Unified School District Superintendent Randal S. Bassett said. “Our investment in STEM education is paying dividends for our students, who are discovering they can make a difference through rigorous instruction and study.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

041218_FUSD_SIMSEF: Fontana Unified students receive certificates of recognition after the SIM Science and Engineering Fair, held April 3 at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana. Five Henry J. Kaiser High School earned gold medals and will display their projects at the California Science and Engineering Fair on April 23-24. Sequoia Middle School and Dorothy Grant Elementary School students received one silver and three bronze medals.

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