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NEWS RELEASE

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Three Fontana Unified Students Triumph at County History Competition, Qualifying for State Finals

FONTANA, CA – Three budding Summit High School historians punched their tickets to the National History Day California (NHD-CA) State Finals after earning first-place medals for presentations at the San Bernardino County History Day Regionals.

Summit High School senior Alyha “Gabe” Madrigal and freshmen Nayleen Pulver and Angel Garay will deliver presentations on two major 20th-century events at the NHD-CA State Finals on April 19-21 after posting wins at regionals. At the county competition in March, Madrigal took first place as a senior individual exhibitor for his project on the Manhattan Project, while Pulver and Garay won senior group exhibit for their group project on the Spanish Influenza.

“I am so proud of Gabe, Angel, and Nayleen, they’ve worked so hard on their projects. They truly deserve it,” Summit High world history teacher Alexandra Becker said. “These students spent countless hours researching, continuing to add new information as they received it, and adding to their poster board. They are so enthusiastic about History Day and it shows in their work.”

History Day competitors create posters for their presentations and are interviewed by judges on their projects during competitions. Competitors must also submit a process paper detailing their primary and secondary sources and an annotated bibliography.

Madrigal has won every county competition he has entered since fifth grade and continued his streak with this year’s presentation on the Manhattan Project, entitled “From Ground Zero to Global Impact: The Unveiling of Nuclear Weapons and Their Human Toll.”

Pulver and Garay’s celebration for their first-place project, “Destroyer and Teacher: Redefining Disease Control Amidst the Spanish Influenza,” was delayed due to a scoring glitch that originally miscredited the win at the regional awards ceremony. It wasn’t until three days after the event finished that Becker received a call from the San Bernardino County Superintendent’s Office informing her that once the correct scores were tallied, Garay and Pulver were judged the winners and headed to state.

“We worked so hard on our exhibit for so long, we went to the competition sure that we would win,” Pulver said. “Then, during the awards, our name wasn’t called, so we didn’t win anything. We thought that was it for us, and we would have to wait until next year, but it all worked out in the end, and we’re very excited to go to state.”

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Madrigal revisited a subject he's passionate about for his final History Day project at Summit High. The super-secret nuclear weapons program, the Manhattan Project, was launched during World War II and helmed by physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer. Madrigal's research led him beyond the gates of Los Alamos and toward the Japanese survivors of the A-bomb blast.

"I wanted to give a voice to the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings," Madrigal said. "Those that survived the blast were referred to as Hibakushas. Hibakushas were isolated from their communities and quite often discriminated against. Not many of these victims have ever shared their stories. I felt it was important to include them as part of my research."

In researching the Spanish Influenza era, Pulver and Garay were struck by how much the century-old pandemic created opportunities for medical research and scientific breakthroughs that presented America with a roadmap on how to deal with such crises in the future.

"While Spanish Influenza did a lot of damage to many people's lives, it also taught society how to deal with epidemics," Garay said. "During the period of the influenza, many people were shot for not wearing a mask. It was a big turning point in our history, and we learned how to control epidemics. The project really taught us about how important it is to learn from our mistakes."

"It is truly rewarding to see Summit students put so much enthusiasm and effort into their studies, and so exciting to see Gabe, Nayleen, and Angel win their awards and move on to the next level," Summit High principal Renee Castanon said. "Congratulations to our students and a huge thank you to Alexandra Becker and our History Day mentors for their hard work and encouragement."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_HISTORY1: Summit High School senior Alyha "Gabe" Madrigal won as a senior individual exhibitor for his project on the Manhattan Project at the San Bernardino County History Day Regionals.

FUSD_HISTORY2: From left: San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Ted Alejandre visits Summit High School freshmen Angel Garay and Nayleen Pulver's group project on the Spanish Influenza at the San Bernardino County History Day Regionals.

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