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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fontana High School's MCJROTC Marksmanship Team Earns Fourth-Place Finish at Nationals

FONTANA, CA – Fontana High School's Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (MCJROTC) Marksmanship team completed its most successful year ever, capturing fourth place at the 2023 CMP National Three-Position Air Rifle Championship, held in June at Camp Perry, Ohio.

It is the highest finish ever recorded by the FOHI program, and represents a final triumph for Class of 2023 graduates Ashley Padilla and Yaira Castro, as well as departing FOHI MCJROTC commanding officer MSgt. Wayne Harkley, who is retiring after running the program for the last 15 years.

In a hard-fought competition against 30 of the best service JROTC Marksmanship teams and clubs from across the country, FOHI was one point shy of taking second place, and fell to fourth place as the result of a third-place tiebreaker.

Padilla continued to perform at the highest levels, earning numerous individual awards during the meet and walking away with \$1,500 in scholarships. Padilla finished in fifth place in the Sporter final division, a competition that featured the top eight shooters from an original field of 164 entrants. Padilla will attend Cal State Los Angeles in the fall.

Padilla's teammates gave her plenty of support, with junior Alma Negrete (12th place overall), Castro (39th place) and junior Stephanie Mendoza (60th place) completing the four-member squad.

Padilla also earned a medal and won scholarship money during the Graduating Seniors competition, taking third place in a field of 25.

"It is a bittersweet moment to come so close to being on the podium," LtCol R.D. Meelarp said. "The girls gave their best and exceeded expectations. We went toe-to-toe with the nation's best and fell millimeters short. We are extremely proud of this team. This is what we knew they were capable of doing all along, despite the challenges. These students are resilient."

Msgt. Harkley is a 24-year veteran of the Marine Corps, distinguishing himself as a member of the Desert Shield and Desert Storm campaigns during the Gulf War of 1990-91. Prior to coming to FOHI, Harkley taught for seven years at Desert Hot Springs High School and one year at Ramona High School. SgtMaj. Abel Leal will be the MCJROTC's new Marine Instructor.

"Fontana High School's MCJROTC program continues to excel and provide students with a solid foundation to build their futures," Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. "Congratulations to the

Marksmanship team for their historic performance, and to MSgt. Harkley for all he has done to shape our students into leaders.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_MCJROTC_2023: The Fontana High School Marine Corps Junior ROTC Marksmanship team completed its most successful year ever, capturing fourth place at the 2023 CMP National Three-Position Air Rifle Championship, held in June at Camp Perry, Ohio, led by Class of 2023 graduate Ashley Padilla, who won \$1,500 in scholarships during the competition. Pictured are Alma Negrete, LtCol. R.D. Meelarp, Yaira Castro, Padilla, Stephanie Mendoza and MSgt. W.K. Harkley.