



Fontana Unified School District

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NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Senior Earns Junior Distinguished Honor as Marksmanship Team Completes Undefeated Season

FONTANA, CA – After four years of developing her skills in Fontana High School’s (FOHI) Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (MCJROTC) marksmanship program, senior Stephanie Mendoza capped the program’s 2025 undefeated season by earning the Junior Distinguished Shooter Badge, the highest honor awarded at the junior level, and becoming the first FOHI student to receive the distinction in more than a decade.

The Junior Distinguished Badge is awarded by the Civilian Marksmanship Program to junior shooters who accumulate 30 excellence-in-competition points, including at least 10 from national-level championships. With fewer than 2,000 badges awarded nationwide, recipients of this award are among the best in the country, recognizing their sustained discipline and competitive consistency.

“This is a huge accomplishment,” said Lieutenant Colonel Rugsithi Denny Meelarp, FOHI MCJROTC Senior Marine Instructor. “Stephanie downplays it a lot, but she has shown incredible dedication and focus over four years. Earning this badge during an undefeated season shows not just her skill, but the strength and depth of the whole team. Watching her achieve this has been more rewarding than achieving it myself; it’s about seeing her take what we’ve taught and run with it.”

Mendoza’s marksmanship journey began in middle school, where she saw a marksmanship showcase and decided to join with her cousin. After realizing her natural affinity for the sport, she decided to continue honing her skills for the entirety of her high school career.

“This badge represents all the practice, consistency, and hard work over the past four years,” Mendoza said. “Being part of an undefeated season made it even more special.”

Through the program, Mendoza has grown in both her technical and leadership skills, mentoring younger cadets by encouraging them to improve academically so they can qualify for competitions and coaching them on technique.

The FOHI Marksmanship Team completed the regular season undefeated, surpassing some of the most dominant teams in the country. Mendoza’s scores led the FOHI teams in the last two competitions of the season, helping the school secure the No. 1 seed for the postseason as they advanced to the National Sporter Air Rifle League Champions Division Tournament.

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The team opened postseason competition with a 2303.1–2191.3 victory over West Valley MCJROTC in the opening round of the 2025 National Sporter Air Rifle League Champions Division Championship Tournament. FOHI then defeated Palm Bay MCJROTC 2319.7 to 2297.2, advancing further in the postseason and continuing its pursuit of a national title.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

DISTINGUISHED_SHOOTER_BADGE1: Fontana High School JROTC senior Stephanie Mendoza demonstrates her marksmanship after earning the Junior Distinguished Shooter Badge, the highest honor awarded to junior competitors, following four years of training.

DISTINGUISHED_SHOOTER_BADGE2: Members of the 2025 Fontana High School MCJROTC marksmanship team gather to celebrate the program's first undefeated season.

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