



El Monte Union High School District

Community Committed to College and Career

PRESS RELEASE

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El Monte Union Students Make Waves at Aquatic Engineering Competition

South El Monte Scuba Squad Advances to SeaPerch National Finals

EL MONTE – After completing a series of challenges to win first place in the high school division of the 2019 Los Angeles Regional SeaPerch competition in March, the South El Monte High School Scuba Squad will showcase its underwater robotics skills at a national competition June 1-2 at the University of Maryland.

This is South El Monte High School's second appearance at the nationals since 2015. This year's aquatic engineering team, advised by science teacher Michael LeGaspé, is made up of seniors Josselyn Melendez, Jose Robles and Erik Zepeda.

"We will have to work extremely hard to win in the nationals," Zepeda said. "We meet every Friday afternoon to test our craft. There is a lot of trial and error in the process, but we are up to the challenge."

The SeaPerch Challenge is an underwater robotics competition designed by the U.S. Navy to inspire students to learn science, engineering, technology and math (STEM) subjects. Schools from 31 states, as well as Puerto Rico and New Zealand, will be competing in the nationals.

For the regional competition, the team applied ideas from Project Lead The Way (PLTW) curriculum to navigate a Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV) through a rescue and recovery mission and obstacle courses, taking first and second place, respectively, and being awarded first place for its engineering notebook.

"The competition was very challenging, because it was pouring rain throughout the day and we had trouble seeing our ROV in the water," Melendez said. "I discovered that some of the target beacons we were tasked with lighting were an inch taller than we had expected, so we had to make adjustments. Our PLTW training helped us out immensely."

Scuba Squad members are working to improve the ROV ahead of the nationals, trying to balance buoyancy, control and speed, as well as adjusting the ROV's capability to retrieve objects as they emulate a search mission modeled on the rescue of Thai students from in a cave in 2018.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

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052819_EMUHSD_SEAPERCH1: South El Monte High School teacher Michael LeGaspe, left, students Jose Robles, Josselyn Melendez and Erik Zepeda, and SeaPerch coordinator Rudy Loera, pose with their first-place trophy from the 2019 Los Angeles Regional SeaPerch competition, held in March. The underwater robotics team will compete at the national competition in June.

052819_EMUHSD_SEAPERCH2: The El Monte Union Board of Trustees recently honored the South El Monte High School Scuba Squad for winning first place at the regional SeaPerch competition in March and qualifying for the national competition in June. Pictured are Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga, left, Board of Trustees Vice President Florencio Briones, Member Maria Morgan, teacher Michael LeGaspe, Erik Zepeda, Josselyn Melendez, Board President David Diaz, Principal Dr. Amy Avina, Clerk Ricardo Padilla and Member Carlos Salcedo.

The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.