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## Rancho Students Pursue Love of Science, Prepare For Middle School Through Science Olympiad Club

**Whittier, CA** – Standing atop a chair, arms outstretched, Kylie Mendez released her handmade helicopter, watching carefully as it slowly descended to the ground. Mendez is one of 20 Rancho Santa Gertrudes Elementary School fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders who are pursuing their love of science through the school's Science Olympiad Club.

The select group of science enthusiasts meets once per week after school to produce experiments and prepare for the annual Los Angeles County Elementary Science Olympiad, in which 60 teams compete in 20 categories, including the Chopper Challenge that has Kylie so hard at work.

"Last year, we won the silver and this time we want the gold," fifth-grader Johann Avalos said. "I like to search and learn about new things and try to build them. Science is my favorite subject because you get to explore new things and work in groups to solve problems."

Rancho's Science Olympiad Club allows students to indulge their passion and curiosity in a fun, hands-on setting. It's run by science teachers Joe Nevarez and Armida Morris and is open to all fifth- and sixth-grade students. The class huddles together in small groups to complete projects while keeping an eye toward the county competition that will unfold Saturday, March 4, 2017.

Only 15 Rancho students will be allowed to compete in the Los Angeles County Elementary Science Olympiad, an elite showcase that saw Rancho take second overall in 2015-16. In preparation for this year's competition, club leader Nevarez has already assigned students to the 20 categories, which include an engineering design challenge, a biomass experiment and a meteorological test.

"I learned a lot from last year's Olympiad and think I have a better idea of what the judges are looking for," sixth-grader Fatima Godoy said. "I have been studying and preparing more this year and think I'll be ready."

Beyond any competition, Rancho's Science Olympiad Club is prepping students for middle school where they will be immersed in science through the Los Nietos Middle School STEAM Academy. LNMS offers diverse coursework that allows students to explore math, art and science in a variety of ways that will represent the next level in their academic ambitions.

"Many of this year's club members were a part of the Olympiad last year and it has been exciting to watch them come into their own and really grasp challenging concepts," Nevarez said.

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The Los Nietos School District's learning community provides:

**ENGAGING** educational opportunities and **EQUITABLE** resources so that all students experience **EXCELLENCE** in learning every day!



“Our Science Olympiad Club challenges our students in ways that we know will help them continually grow as students and science enthusiasts.”

The Los Nietos School District helped to ease the transition from elementary to middle school on Nov. 15 when it held the inaugural STEAM Festival, a celebration of science, technology, engineering, art and math for elementary school students at LNMS.

Rancho Science Olympiad members were among the nearly 400 students who enjoyed interactive experiments while learning about the STEAM Academy during an event that strengthened the relationships between the District’s levels of curriculum.

“As we teach and inspire our students, our goal is always to prepare them to continue achieving positive results at every level,” Los Nietos Superintendent Jonathan Vasquez said. “Our Science Olympiad club plays a special role in helping us achieve this, and keeps our kids excited about the possibilities of science.”

### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**120616\_LOSNIETOS\_SCIENCEOLYMPIAD1:** Rancho Santa Gertrudes student Kylie Mendez tests out her handmade helicopter during a Science Olympiad Club meeting. The club meets once per week to pursue their love for science.

**120616\_LOSNIETOS\_SCIENCEOLYMPIAD2:** The 2015-16 Rancho Santa Gertrudes Olympiad Club poses with their silver medals after taking second place overall at last year’s Los Angeles County Elementary Science Olympiad competition. This year’s club will compete in the annual event on March 4, 2017.

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