



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

CONTACT: Gail Pinsker
310.450.8338 ext. 70230
gpinsker@smmusd.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 26, 2015

Three Santa Monica Students Selected to Conduct Research on Climate Change

Santa Monica, Calif. – Three Santa Monica High School juniors will embark on a complex mission to explore and measure rising sea levels this summer as part of a field study to evaluate how climate change is altering the nation’s coastlines.

Claire Rawson-Dannenbaum, Brian Stewart and Matias Biraben were selected for L.A. Ignite Fellowships, which are offered by a partnership between the Earthwatch Institute – an international environmental charity that conducts scientific eco-research – and the family-run Durfee Foundation.

“This is an extraordinary opportunity for our students to utilize critical thinking skills, while gaining hands-on field experience,” Santa Monica-Malibu Unified Superintendent Sandra Lyon said. “This validates our commitment to providing students a rigorous science and technology curriculum. We are so proud of our talented and resourceful students at Samohi.”

Rising sea levels along America’s coastlines are a great cause of concern for researchers of climate change. In Rhode Island, the students will join Earthwatch in evaluating how regional sea levels have changed during the last 500 years.

The students will participate in every step of the scientific process, while learning technical skills important to the field of earth science. They will also gain a fresh perspective that will enhance their advancement into higher education.

Earthwatch seeks candidates that not only show a passion and curiosity for science and nature, but are also very social, friendly and down-to-earth. Though these characteristics can define all of the Samohi applicants, Rawson-Dannenbaum, Stewart and Biraben were selected for their ability to communicate and innovate – qualities that will serve them well over the course of this two-week field study.

“This is a really exciting opportunity for our students,” Samohi Advanced Placement science instructor Kate Song said. “They will have the opportunity to be out in the field with professors and scientists who are conducting the same research.”

--more--

Song is continually seeking ways for her students to experience real-life science outside of the classroom. At the beginning of this school year, Song enlisted two Samohi seniors who were awarded L.A. Ignite Fellowships in 2014, Sadie Saltzman and Dylan Meea, along with Earthwatch L.A. Outreach Coordinator Miguel Perla, to speak to her Advanced Placement biology and physiology classes about the field study experience.

The presentation prompted 12 students to submit applications for this year's program, with three ultimately winning coveted spots on the research team.

Upon their return from Rhode Island in the fall, Rawson-Dannenbaum, Stewart and Biraben will share their experiences with Song's incoming AP students.

"We want to make Earthwatch field studies a yearly tradition at Samohi," Song said. "Next year, we expect many more students to apply for L.A. Ignite Fellowships."

Photo Captions:

Earthwatch1: Three Santa Monica High School juniors – Brian Stewart, Claire Rawson-Dannenbaum, pictured here, and Matias Biraben – will embark on a complex mission to explore and measure rising sea levels this summer as part of a field study to evaluate how climate change is altering the nation's coastlines after being selected for L.A. Ignite Fellowships.

Earthwatch2: Three Santa Monica High School juniors – Brian Stewart, Claire Rawson-Dannenbaum and Matias Biraben, pictured here – will embark on a complex mission to explore and measure rising sea levels this summer as part of a field study to evaluate how climate change is altering the nation's coastlines after being selected for L.A. Ignite Fellowships.

###

As a community of learners, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District works together in a nurturing environment to help students be visionary, versatile thinkers; resourceful, life-long learners; effective, multilingual communicators and global citizens.