

## Neighbors



### ExCEL team takes 2nd in nation

Tuesday, May 26 | 10:20 p.m.

BY HOWARD BUCK

COLUMBIAN STAFF WRITER



ExCEL Academic League students celebrate a second-place finish at the Science Olympiad National Tournament.

ExCEL Academic League middle-school students from Clark County rocketed (pun intended) to a second-place finish at the Science Olympiad National Tournament.

Blending physics, science and math, book smarts and mechanical know-how in 23 separate events, the local home-school students and Washington state champs outshone most of 2,000 competitors who converged May 16 in Augusta, Ga.

It took a total team effort to better ExCEL's fourth-place finish a year ago, said Ann Williams, coach of the 15-member squad.

Several partners medaled by finishing in the top six of six different categories, while all points scored by each two-person entry was tallied, in track meet fashion. "Every one of the 15 kids put their heart into this," Williams said. "Every single point mattered, and they knew it."

Still, clearly leading the way were twins Annika and Brita Horlings, 15, ninth-graders who starred in their fifth and final national Olympiad.

The twins took first place in a "Dynamic Planet" event based on earthquakes and volcanoes, apt subjects here in Southwest Washington. The duo also took second in Anatomy and fourth in Meteorology.

Daniel Schmidt teamed with Nathan Blanchard to finish fifth in a Robo Cross robotics event. Daniel and his sister, Kara, medaled in the Roads Scholar map-reading event.

Robbin Goss and Hannah Bombardier medaled in Crave the Wave competition, based on the physics of waves.

Other team members competing: Genny Billington, Nathan Boudon, Grace Collins, Ethan Crockford, Alex Hayden, Eli Sausville and Hayley and Mara Williams.

Alternates who appeared in noncounting, trial events were Meri Collins, Miguel Jefferies, Joseph Marugg and Bridget Schmieder.

Repeating as champions of the middle school competition was Solon Middle School from Ohio, a state with exceptional Science Olympiad emphasis, Williams said. "They were good, far and above the rest of the teams," she said.

An Ohio squad also took the high school title.

But ExCEL gave it all it had. Students arrived in Georgia two days early to prep and adjust body clocks for a 7 a.m. start on competition day (that's 4 a.m., Pacific time).

Several treated themselves to a visit to Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center, on the Florida coast nearby. Some even got to see the May 11 launch of the space shuttle Atlantis, a lifetime thrill and supreme sample of science know-how.

On the flip side, Mother Nature flexed her muscle with torrential downpours and "very exciting" thunderstorms in the days immediately after the finals.

She also thanked Clark County community support in raising funds needed for the cross-country trip, a costly expense for many in the high-flying, high-scoring group.



Howard Buck: 360-735-4515 or [howard.buck@columbian.com](mailto:howard.buck@columbian.com).

[Show 1 Comment\(s\)](#)

You must [register](#) before you can post a comment.

[Site Map](#) | [Corrections](#)  
[Blogs](#) | [Archives](#)

[Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#)  
[Help/Feedback](#) | [Reprint Requests](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

[Merchandise](#) | [Motors](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#)

---

Copyright 2009 columbian.com. All rights reserved. Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our user agreement.