



Southern Oregon Education Service District Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Fundraiser Event for Students to Attend Gallaudet Academic Bowl Increases Student Success

Across Southern Oregon, there are more than 160 deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students in kindergarten through high school. These students use American Sign Language (ASL), spoken English, or a combination of the two to communicate. Many also use ASL interpreters, and a variety of technology, including hearing aids, cochlear implants, and FM systems to help them succeed in school. Despite all of these tools, it is still a challenge for DHH students to access all the information presented in the classroom. As a result, DHH students must work harder than their hearing peers to be successful in the academic setting.

Yet, four DHH students in the Southern Oregon Education Service District (SOESD) Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (PDHH) are proving that determination pays off. They will be demonstrating their academic success during their participation in the Gallaudet Academic Bowl. After excelling in preliminary rounds, they have been accepted to compete in the western regional competition, which will take place March 9-12 in Irvine, California. There they will compete against 80 other DHH high school scholars in categories including math, science, popular culture, social studies, art, and literature.

The Gallaudet Academic Bowl is unique in that spoken language is not required. The questions are projected, and students submit answers in written English, while moderators use American Sign Language rather than spoken English. The experience is life changing for participating students. Being surrounded by other students like themselves who also excel academically provides motivation for them to keep up their excellent work in school. As a result, 87% of students who have been on the SOESD Academic Bowl team for the past 5 years have gone on after succeeding in high school to attend college.

This year's team is comprised of freshman Joseph Mella, sophomores Samantha Castaneda and Javonte Spears, and junior Emily McCutcheon. The team has been preparing for the competition since September, with a goal of placing in the top four at regionals, so they can then compete for the national championship held in April at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.

In addition to practicing for the competition, the students have been working hard to raise funds for registration, uniforms, and travel expenses. In addition to seeking donations from friends, family, and local businesses, students will host a fundraiser on February 13, 2018, at Wild River Pizza in Medford. Please join them to enjoy a delicious meal and see their raffle table with hundreds of dollars' worth of prizes. Wild River, a generous supporter of the Academic Bowl team for four years running, will donate a percentage of the day's proceeds to the team. Team members hope the community will show its support by attending this event.

Wild River Pizza in Medford is located at 2684 N Pacific Hwy, Medford, OR 97501.

For more information, please contact SOESD PDHH Coordinator, Mark Moskowitz at 541-245-5196.

