

Published May 22nd, 2024

Lafayette eighth graders look to repeat success at OM World Championships

Submitted by Manju Lind



Left to right: Shriya Lind, Lauren Brekke, David Siu, Sanika Khamkar, Madhav Sahasranaman Photo provided Five Lafayette eighth graders representing Stanley Middle School are returning to the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals this week, eager to continue their 2024 success. This year's championships are taking place in Iowa and are expected to draw hundreds of teams from around the world.

Odyssey of the Mind is a decades-old, global, creative competition that engages kids from kindergarten through college in STEAM (Science Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) problem-solving activities. At the competition, the team will compete against other middle school teams and present a creative solution to one of five long-term open-ended problems, and a spontaneous "think-on-your-feet" challenge.

At the 2023 championships in Michigan, the Stanley team captured first place in the spontaneous competition and fifth overall, beating out over 50 teams from across the United States, Asia, and Europe. While this is the

Stanley team's second time attending the World championships in person, this is their third time representing Lafayette on the global stage.

For this year's long-term problem, the Stanley team created a "play that goes wrong," where required set and character malfunctions cause antics and chaos on opening night in front of distinguished guests. During their Northern California state competition, the team's performance through both planned and unplanned set malfunctions earned them first place for their Long Term problem as well as the prestigious OMER's Award. The OMER's Award "recognizes those individuals. who, during a tournament, serve as exemplary examples or role models through their actions and words."

In describing the team's challenge in overcoming an unplanned, complete set collapse, a judge wrote, "The team. put on an amazing performance, improvising as they went. They even had some judges convinced it was supposed to happen! They embodied the spirit of the problem and overcame `antics' in their performance."

The team also earned first place for their elaborate set and costume construction made nearly entirely out of recycled and upcycled materials.

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