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THE WILLITS NEWS

## Bringing home the GOLD and silver and bronze

Willits Charter School's academic athletes win 13 medals at state meet

SPECIAL FOR THE WILLITS NEWS

**A**FTER MONTHS OF INTENSE STUDYING, Willits Charter School decathletes have only one thing to say: "Thank goodness it's over!" In addition to the relief of finally getting a full night's sleep, they are also feeling great about bringing home 13 medals from the 25th annual California State Academic Decathlon in Sacramento.

Freshman participant Erin Mallon said, "Despite lacking one team member and having only three returning members, we managed to beat our score from last year and win eight more medals than last year. I'm really proud of our team!"

The competition took place in Sacramento March 12 through 14, beginning with tough multiple-choice tests in music, botany, math, language and literature, art, economics, and social studies, as well as an essay—all focusing on the theme "America: the Growth of a Nation."

The second day the students were judged on their interview skills and on prepared and impromptu speeches.

"We are proud of our team," said Team Coach Amanda Bergstrom. "They spent hours on speech preparation alone and we met on weekends to practice. They're a talented and hard-working group."

Finally, the teams were given the ultimate test—the Super Quiz, a public event in which each team member answers 10 timed questions. This year the subject was the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The Super Quiz is a high-pressure event, with every contestant grilled in front of their teammates and an auditorium full of spectators.

Sophomore team member Mariah Erlick tells of having a recurring dream in which she is setting out with the Lewis and Clark expedition from Camp Wood, where their journey began. "I keep finding myself going in circles and never getting to the Pacific Ocean," she says. "It's a nightmare!"

Although students can't win medals in the Super Quiz, they can win individual medals in every other category.

Mariah Erlick pulled off a shiny silver in botany. Erin Mallon received a bronze in botany and also had the third-highest overall score in the Scholastic category for Division III. Forest Monroe, a 12th-grader, received the second-highest overall score in the Honors category, won silver medals in economics and interview, and a bronze in art.

Sarah Schleuder, a 12th-grader, got a silver metal in art.



**Willits Charter School Academic Decathlon team celebrating their victories at the state competition. Top row (left to right):** Austin Ballard, Travis Killmer, Sarah Schleuder, Mariah Erlick. **Middle row:** Maya Griffin, Olivia Griffin, Erin Mallon (holding trophy). **Front:** So-Ky Loren, Forest Monroe, Jennifer Valentic (coach) and Amanda Bergstrom (coach). **Not pictured:** Alessandra Yanez.

Freshman Travis Killmer won a bronze in both language and literature and economics. Team captain, 12th-grader Olivia Griffin, won a bronze medal in music and received the highest overall score in language and literature for Division III, taking home a gold medal.

The team is excited about next year's theme, "Exploring the Ancient World," which will focus on classical Greek, Egyptian, Roman and near-eastern cultures.

Freshman Travis Killmer sums it up: "Lewis and Clark were great, but I'm ready to dig into the really old stuff."

Coach Jennifer Valentic throws down the gauntlet to other county schools: "Let's go Mendocino County—where's our competition?"