



*The*  
**PANTHER**  
*press*

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Modest High School

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**WELCOME**  
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# Table of Contents

The American Legion California State Program  3

Spring Intercession  4-5

Panthers Support Staff Keep Things Moving  6-7

MHS - Open for In-Person Learning  8-9

Hungry Panthers Can Count on These Heroes  10-11

Panthers Can Count on Our Custodians  12-13

Panthers Shine at Science Olympiad Competition  14-15

GenUp - Students Make Their Voices Heard  16

# Boys/Girls State

Educational achievement and leadership are qualities that our society emphasizes for the success of future students. These are important traits that students develop in order to become successful and fare well in the “real world” competition. That is what the Boys/Girls State program is for. According to counselor Mr. Greener, “the American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary Girls State are summer leadership and citizenship programs for high school juniors, which focus on exploring the mechanics of American government and politics.” Boys/Girls State participants learn the rights, privileges and responsibilities of franchised citizens. The training is objective and centers on the structure of city, county and state governments. In order to be accepted, students must go through an interview process after being nominated by teachers.

This year, 4 candidates and 2 alternates were selected from Modesto High. The 4 candidates were Matthew Aitken, Kyle Zheng, Fernando Bazan, and Nithya Medam. The 2 alternates were Manveersinh Parmar and Rana Bannakhah. According to counselor Mr. Greener, “The selection process is two-tiered, and based on several factors. A group of 11th grade young men and women were chosen based on academics, extracurricular activities, leadership skills and community involvement. Faculty members including teachers, counselors and administrators were given the opportunity to nominate students for the program.” He has high hopes for our candidates, saying how they will “likely form positive relationships with others from around the state. Many of these relationships may be long lasting and benefit our student delegates both socially and professionally.”

Additionally, Boys/Girls State was forced to go virtual, as the COVID-19 virus continues to be an issue. The conditions for this year were very different from previous years. Despite the new virtual setting, Nithya Medam said, “The virtual interview was more of a benefit in my opinion as I felt that I was given more time to prepare. Still, it would have been nice to have a face to face conversation with my interviewer.” The interviewing process also had different conditions, but Kyle Zheng said that the interview was “not too intimidating, but you do not know the questions ahead of time and so the people who do the best must already know major political events that have occurred in history or in recent events.” Boys/Girls State is difficult to get in, as its standards are very high. Candidate Matthew Aitken said, “Getting into Boys State gives me an opportunity to learn about new interesting topics. I am grateful that I can experience what happens in government and learn what happens in it. I think it will be fun, too.”



Top from Left to Right:

Fernando Bazan and Nithya Medam

by Richard Zheng



Bottom from Left to Right:

Matthew Aitken and Kyle Zheng



Students during a school intercession. Notice how COVID has affected daily school life, the dividers that separate each student.

# Spring Intercession

This spring promised a fresh new semester for the students and teachers at Modesto High School. However, for some, the end of the semester was an inevitable concern. Virtual learning has thrown challenges that gave students many struggles in different subjects. The coronavirus has forced several to adapt to this contrasting lifestyle. In order to combat this, Modesto High has given students the opportunity to come on campus and improve in the third quarter and first semester grades during spring break, known as Spring Intercession. “It is one of the many extra chances teachers are graciously giving to students because of the hardships some face due to COVID and distance learning,” Mrs. Coufal said.

A variety of teachers are allowing students to participate in this event and come on campus in hopes that it will help them improve areas they are struggling. Mr. Jeans believes that in-person learning is a better, more effective way in aiding student efforts, both in academics and other problems a student might face outside of school.

“In-person learning is far superior to the online version for many reasons: body language, facial expressions, and eye contact are communication vehicles that can aid in checking for understanding that can be entirely lost with distant learning,” Mr. Jean said.

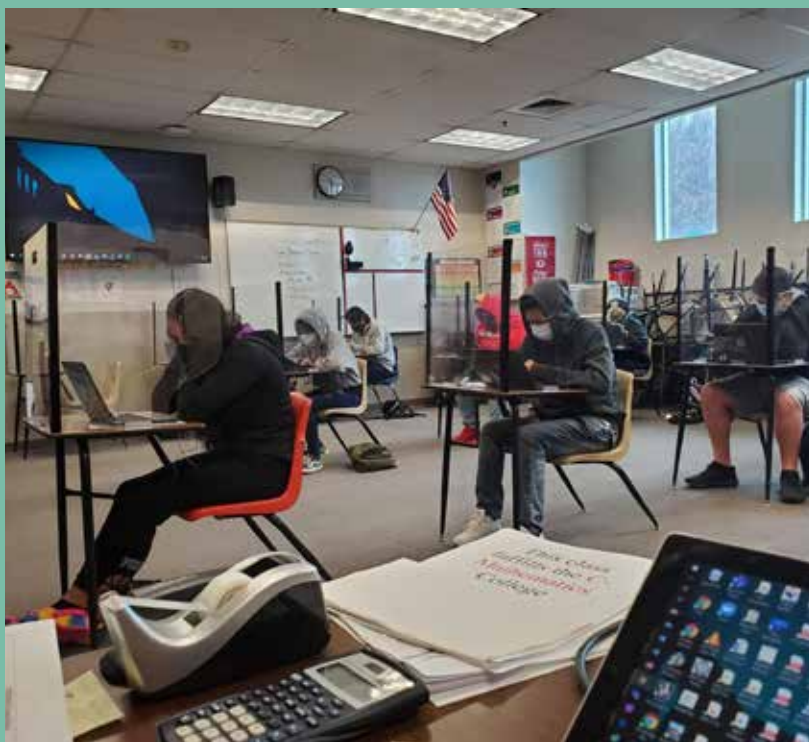
Teachers are willing to work with students by having them participate in Spring Intercession, but not every teacher does this the same way. Some are allowing students to turn in late assignments, extra credit assignments, and some teachers gave students the opportunity to come to spring intercession and improve their first semester grades. “The pandemic has caused students to fall behind academically. This was a way to help students make up work,” Mr. Gonzalez replied. Many educators were aware the pandemic would force students behind in their studies, and Spring Intercession was a way to help. However, was it successful?

Students who participated in Intercession with the goal of raising their grades

rendered some success. Junior, Julienna Escobedo said, "I attended spring intercession to bring up my psychology grade, which I did. For the most part, it was helpful because I wouldn't have done work at home." Most students face the same issues regarding distractions while attending school at home. While working and studying in a comfortable, familiar space, students are vulnerable to their surroundings since something in reach is more entertaining than focusing on digital classes. Junior, Luis Vega who faced the same problem claimed, "It was helpful because I was able to focus without any distractions..."

Modesto High School's Spring Intercession, according to Gonzalez, was a success because it helped many students. He expressed that it would have been considered a success even if it had helped only one student. Thankfully, hundreds of students were able to improve their grades. "We had over 300 students attend one or more inter-session classes," Mr. Gonzalez exclaimed. "Here at MoHi, we had hundreds of students improve one or more grades! That is what makes MoHi special."

By Symphonee Russell



(Left) and (Above) More images of students working on assignments in order to raise their grades.





This year, students and parents conducted school business at the main entrance. Various employees took turns working to help assist.

# It Takes a Village

Over the course of the past year in this pandemic, Modesto High, and many other high schools from across the country, have faced countless struggles in their efforts to maintain a positive school environment and support all students. Modesto High's support staff has been at the forefront of student support, and has overcome numerous challenges in order to successfully help the MoHi student body.

Mr. Wilson, who works in the Technology Department, said that the most overwhelming challenge was the flood of calls that the ITES Department received at the beginning of the pandemic. "At the beginning of the school year, we were handling over 8,000 calls a month to our help desk and in January we were at 1,000 calls," he remarked. Mr. Wilson added that using a remote desktop software to solve student device problems remotely tremendously helped the tech department solve students' technology issues.

Meanwhile, the amazing counselor's at Modesto High faced their own challenges. Counselor Jorge Perez said

that the biggest challenge he faced was, "not being able to meet with students and parents in person at school." Mr. Perez decided to solve this problem by taking the time and effort to drive to the homes of students to have home visits with students and parents!

In the library and book room, Ms. Paula Sanches solved the issue of delivering books to students with minimal contact by placing books on the front table for students to pick up and by using a library book drop box. It is clear that flexibility and creativity have been crucial this year.

It goes without saying that the jobs of Modesto High's support staff have drastically changed throughout the past year. One of the biggest concerns was being able to learn how to use the technology necessary to facilitate meetings with students. Mr. Perez explained, "I had to quickly learn and adapt to virtual meetings and presentations, and rely more on technology." Even Mr. Wilson had to start using a different type of technology in order to do his job safely.



Curriculum Office secretary, Ashley Patterson has worked tirelessly to keep things running smoothly, including coordinating substitute teacher coverage among MANY other things.



Instructional Materials Clerk, Paula Sanches pulled books students would need and had them ready at the school's main entrance, adapting to the crazy times to meet students' and teachers' needs.



Ms. Jacklyn Damian answering phones and working at the main entrance to assist parents and students.

“When I don’t have anyone at my counter, I am on our Help Desk phones answering calls from our entire computer user community, both staff and students, using remote software.”

Even after what has been arguably the most tumultuous year of MoHi history, these staffers still love and appreciate Modesto High and the students more than ever. “I do miss all of the students in the library, all the giggles and smiles!” Ms. Sanches noted, “The school became a very empty cave without the sounds from all of our young Panthers. I am happy to hear the sounds beginning to return!” And with COVID rates across the county and state declining in recent weeks, we are on track to begin a full in-person school year next year. As stated best by Mr. Perez, “Together as a MoHi family we will overcome. We are MOHI Strong!”

By Rana Banankhah



# Modesto High Reopens

By Kassandra  
Delgado

Just a bit over a year ago, Superintendent Noguchi announced a two week school closure, from March 19 to April 5, that extended from two weeks, to one month and a half, to an entire year. But, following the end of the 2020-2021 school year's Spring Break, middle and high schools reopened in a hybrid model starting March 29.

In a study conducted by researchers from the National Center for Research on Education Access and Choice, an ed-policy think tank based in Tulane University, there was no evidence indicating that reopening schools in a hybrid format increased COVID-19 hospitalization rates, concluding that it seemed "safe to reopen schools" — as long as CDC guidelines are being responsibly followed.

Across the state, schools have been gradually reopening, especially in the past month after Governor Newsom incentivized districts to reopen by April 1 with financial support. As of April 4, 20% of Californian high school students have, at the very least, the option to return to class in a hybrid model.

When explaining the decision to push for the reopening of 7-12 Modesto City schools, Public Information Officer Becky Fortuna, responding on behalf of Superintendent Noguchi, said that state officials stated 7-12 schools could not "welcome



students on campus for in-person learning until [Stanislaus] county reached the red tier...” and so, upon the county being assigned to the red tier on March 23, reopening plans became much more feasible.

For high schools, the organizing principle priorities have some differences from the elementary schools. The MCS District protocols reflect this — efforts are directed more towards social distancing and less towards “maintaining stable cohorts” because there is not one set classroom for a group of students at the high school level.

Modesto High and its surrounding community is in a high-risk zip code, per Governor Newsom’s order prioritizing certain neighborhoods for vaccinations based on metrics like household income and access to transportation. On top of this, Modesto High is the MCS high school with the most enrolled students. Due to this, the school administration is further enforcing CDC guidelines and “all MCS District protocols and directives,” shared Principal Manning. Staff members are enforcing the proper wearing of face coverings, as well as pushing for the constant sanitizing of public spaces across campus.

Despite the clear differences in the environment on campus, students who have returned to school in a hybrid model have spoken highly of the new learning system. Sophomore Paola Coss, part of Cohort A, said that her experience so far in the hybrid model has been “better than expected”, not just because she’s learned more effectively but also because she’s gotten to interact more with her teachers than she had been capable before, over a screen.



ASB Leadership students offered support and service for Panthers returning to school.

Junior Leah Raby mirrored Coss’ outlook on the hybrid model. “It’s nice getting the exercise, and having a teacher in the classroom helps to keep me on task,” she said, adding that she prefers hybrid learning to distance learning.

Meanwhile, junior Marissa Pritchard said she prefers distance learning over the new hybrid format. She would have preferred to stay at home for the rest of the school year, then “start fresh” next year and leave this year behind.

Students and staff members are slowly, but surely, learning to settle into this *new*, new normal, just as vaccination rollout increases and hospitalization rates in Stanislaus County lower. Superintendent Noguchi said that she hopes that, when this pandemic ends, “we will emerge stronger, wiser, and more compassionate.”

# Nutrition Services

## Fueling Our Educations

2020-2021 has been one of the strangest years for students and staff. Modesto High School has really had to be flexible to make this year work. People talk about the teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, administrators and office staff, and how hard they have worked this year. That is all so true! There is another group of extremely hard workers on this campus, however, who deserve high praise as well - the nutrition services workers who keep our cafeteria running and our stomachs full. They have worked hard to make sure our students stay fed and healthy.

Nutrition Services Supervisor, Teresa Hernandez, has been working with Nutrition services since 1992 and at Modesto High specifically

since 2013. Ms. Hernandez has worked in other schools but says Modesto High is her favorite, claiming that "the students here are awesome!" Since joining the Panther Family, she's seen how helpful and awesome the staff is firsthand, and appreciates the great students. She said, "The students here are polite and respectful."

The pandemic brought new challenges to her job, but Hernandez hasn't changed her opinion of the school in the slightest. She explained the hard work of the kitchen staff. Ms. Teresa Hernandez said her crew in the kitchen "does their best and works hard together as a team to get things done safely and on time to be ready to serve the students when they come into the cafeteria at

lunch time." There are eighteen members, including her, that make sure they all do their best to serve the students nutritious meals, whether that means in person or picking up a grab and go package.

Ms. Hernandez expressed her thanks to all the students that go to the cafeteria during lunch time to get their lunch. She has seen the most participation within the Panther Family than the other high schools in Modesto. She stated that she and the entire crew are "here for you and are happy to serve you."

The Modesto High family has worked really hard this year and the cafeteria workers are such an important part of this. They have had to change the way things are done multi-

MCS Nutrition Services Truck arrives to deliver lots of food to MHS.

Always a smile on her face, Jeanette Sanchez prepares to help organize the latest shipment.





MoHi's Elvira Demunoz gets help from Christina from Hanshaw making grab and go bags.



More help from Hanshaw: Delores and Sophia put together lunches for distance learning students.



Nutrition Services Supervisor, Teresa Hernandez receiving a shipment of supplies.

ple times since the first school closure last year.

Nutrition Services employee, Janet Cordero, expressed that the biggest challenge for her has been “trying to feed the kids who are at school, while also preparing meals for the students who are still distance learning at home.” Balancing her attention between those in person and at home has been a struggle, but she’s kept at it as they all have with grace and a smile.

Rebecca Hernandez, also a Nutrition Services employee added that it’s “also been difficult working quickly like we need to and adjusting to the masks with the heat in the kitchen from the ovens.” The kitchens are already hot enough without the added heat from the masks.

Our Panthers in the kitchen have quietly persevered behind the scenes. However, it has not been all that bad. Ms. Rebecca Hernandez explained that “the workers have a great attitude and are focused on the reason they are here, to help the students.”

All of the employees who work in Nutrition Services are glad to have the students back in the cafeteria and get even the littlest bit of normalcy back.

Students have noticed the hard work of those in the cafeteria and also the difference this year. Sophomore, Jack Miller said, “the main

difference between going to lunch now and before is kinda the lack of people you see and talk to. It’s now more smaller groups here and there that I see.”

With the Covid restrictions and the distance learning, there is a lack of big groups now compared to the clumps of students in the previous years. Miller added that “getting lunch is honestly easier now since there are less people in the lines. Everything goes a little quicker.”

The lack of students on campus makes for faster lunch lines during the lunch period as not as many students are on campus.

Though the lines are shorter, Jack expressed that he misses having everyone on campus. Miller said that he recognizes all that the Panthers at MoHi and thinks they’re doing a great job.

Thinking about the hard work of those in Nutrition Services during this pandemic should cause us to consider all the times we have taken their hard work for granted even during “normal” times.

Next time you are back on campus and getting lunch or breakfast, remember to thank those who serve you with a smile.

# Heroes of the Halls

## MoHi Custodians Work Day and Night to Keep Panthers Safe and Prep for In-person Learning

In March 2020 everyone went home for what was supposed to be a couple of weeks to flatten the curve. Fast forward to over a year later and words and phrases like Teams, distance learning, and virtual have taken on a whole new meaning and become part of people's everyday vocabularies. Through all of the uncertainty, the custodians at Modesto High School continued to work hard to maintain the campus, fix and update classrooms and offices, make repairs, and prepare to welcome students back to campus.

Because the custodial staff here works so hard and draws so little attention to themselves, people don't necessarily stop to consider just how much work went into preparing for students and staff to safely return to campus. The custodial staff had to endure constantly changing mandates to hit what was essentially a moving target. They would ready classrooms to accommodate a certain number of students, then the allowable number of students would change. They processed supply orders and deliv-

ered hundreds of items to classrooms, installing and inspecting rooms and offices repeatedly prior to reopening. Now that classrooms are open to students, they have a daily checklist of things that have to be done to sanitize and prepare the room for the next day. The work is never-ending and often thankless.

Head custodian, Rigo Peral, stated that he and his staff of seven custodians had to paint arrows around campus to direct pedestrian traffic, install plexiglass on desks, rearrange desks, and deliver supplies. This is in addition to other regular duties that must get done.

When asked about some of the challenges and frustrations Peral said, "It was a frustration at first because we had to have desks a certain distance from each other, then that distance changed and we had to go back and add more desks into each classroom."

Despite the challenges, Peral expressed that he felt supported throughout the process. He said, "We were very supported by the district. We were given overtime to get everything

Every desk, in every classroom, needed to be fitted with plexiglass barriers.



Every classroom, office, etc. had to be set up with an air filter that was provided by the school district.





Modesto High's Head Custodian, Rigo Peral, catching up on emails and paperwork while coordinating all that went in to getting ready to reopen the school to students.

ready.”

Peral expressed that he and the rest of the custodians are motivated by the desire to have everything look good for students when they return to school.

When school finally did reopen, the campus definitely looked different from the arrows to the plexiglass, but it still looks like the well-maintained campus everyone has come to love and appreciate. The custodians at Modesto High will tell you that they are just doing their

jobs, and they would down play their efforts. The work they have done this year and every year before this shows more than just doing the minimum. The work they do shows the same Modesto High pride everyone should take in caring for this school campus and for each other.

Thank you Modesto High Custodians for all of your efforts through this difficult time and for the beautiful environment in which students can come and learn!

Each classroom was delivered supplies of masks, sanitizing wipes, and bottled water. Additionally, hand sanitizer dispensers will installed in every classroom.



Rogelio Servin is just one of the many hard-working custodians at Modesto High School!





# Science Olympiad

by Symphonee Russell

Science Olympiad has been a treasured event, loved by many students and educators at Modesto High School. Although COVID-19 has prevented the teams from having a friendly competition in person, this didn't stop them from continuing from a safe distance.

There have been many changes to ensure Science Olympiad can still be enjoyed in ways members can still participate safely. Teams would often work together to prepare for different events, studying anything that might appear on a test or anything they might know for labs or projects. Student member Carson Carranza explained, "Students learn knowledge that is specific to their exams if they are in a test event. The events have a wide ranch of study from astronomy, anatomy, genetic, and even ornithology (the study of birds)."

Science Olympiad consists of 23 events which are placed into three groups, labs, tests or builds. If the event is about building projects, students work together to formulate their devices, and if the event is a test, then team members complete the exams. This STEM competition is organized into two teams, Modesto Black and Modesto Crimson. Out of the 23 events comprising Science Olympiad, team members compete for 2-4 of those events in groups of 2 or 3, depending on the event type.

The Regional competition usually takes place at Modesto Junior College, while the State Competition is held at CSU Stanislaus, although the location for state competition does change every few years. This year, and possibly a few more to come, members used the online platform Scilympiad for testing events. Teammates with build events submit videos of their machinery or joined Zoom calls to present it. Ms. Matlock described how Science Olympiad was usually set up by saying, "Typically students have set event times and then compete in different science classrooms. There are test proctors overseeing the competition."

Science Olympiad is a competition that is held all around the county against different high schools. "We often compete against our friends from other schools and strive to be the best," Carranza added. This year, Modesto High school's Crimson team earned second place, and the Black team earned fourth, meaning both teams qualified for the state competition.

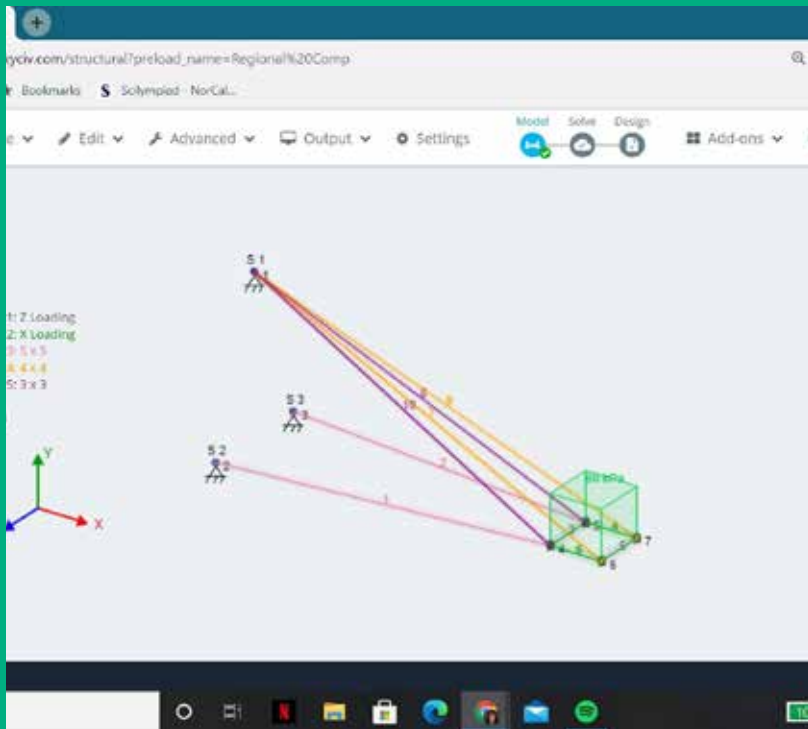
In all, Modesto High's long history of creativity and academics grant student members a chance to build team sportsmanship while learning about how the world around them works. Mr. Matlock said, "Students use real-world application of science. So, what they are learning in their science class is many times applied to the events that they might be competing in." Science Olympiad is a way for students all around the county to show their skills and abilities and in return, students get to learn more about their surroundings.

## Black Team - Fourth Place Overall

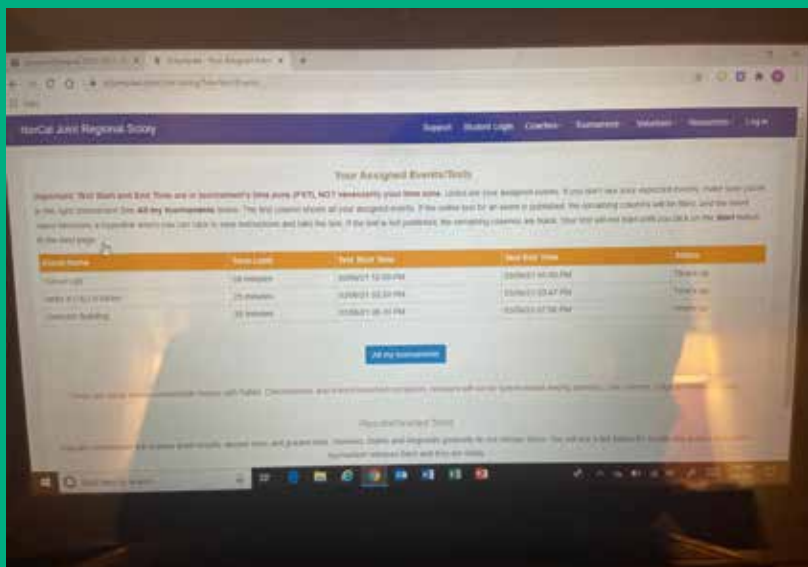
Jaya Naidu	5th	Dynamic Planet
	5th	Forensics
	5th	Water Quality
Keith Buenrostor	4th	Circuit Lab
	3rd	Digital Structures
	5th	Dynamic Planet
	5th	Water Quality
Nathan Choup	5th	Detective Building
	5th	Machines
Citlalit Alvarez	3rd	Digital Structures
	3rd	Gravity Vehicles
	4th	Helicopters
Arshaun Faraji	4th	Designer Genes
	4th	Helicopters
Irene Alvarez	4th	Circuite Lab
	4th	Designer Genes
	4th	Protein Modeling
Hannah Leamy	3rd	Sounds of Music
Renee Zhu	4th	Protein Modeling
	3rd	Sounds of Music
Justin Dumars	5th	Detector Building
Poala Coss	5th	Forensics
Areeya Dewitt	5th	Machines
Jenny Chang	3rd	Gravity Vehicle

## Crimson Team - 2nd Place Overall

Nandini Naidu	1st	Digital Structures
	1st	Helicopters
	2nd	Gravity Vehicle
Carson Carranza	2nd	Designer Genes
	1st	Digital Structures
	1st	Helicopters
	2nd	Gravity Vehicle
Mason Neumann	2nd	Designer Genes
	2nd	Machines
	1st	Sounds of Music
Gargi Rao	4th	Experiment and Data Analysis
	4th	Forensics
	1st	Water Quality
Divya Katyal	2nd	Chem Lab
	4th	Forensics
	1st	Water Quality
Rana Banankhah	3rd	Circuit Lab
	4th	Detector Building
	1st	Write It CAD It
Nithya Medam	3rd	Circuit Lab
	4th	Detector Building
	1st	Write It CAD It
Ferial Dagher	4th	CodeBusters
	4th	Experiment and Data Analysis
	3rd	Protein Modeling
Haiying Zeng	4th	Experiment and Data Analysis
	3rd	Protein Modeling
	1st	Sounds of Music
Partapp Bains	4th	CodeBusters
	2nd	Machines
Maya Salvador	3rd	Astronomy
	2nd	Fossils
Hannah Diep	2nd	Chem Lab
	3rd	Protein Modeling
Jackson Perry	4th	Dynamic Planet



(left) Student Carson Carranza's and Nandini Naidu's helicopter model that they submitted for the Regional Competition



Rana Banankhah's view of her assigned tasks. Since COVID, most tests and activities are done on home and on the website



Carson Carranza testing his and Nandini Naidu's helicopter model.

# Generation Up

In times of COVID-19, the masks we wear are to protect our physical being along with protecting those around us. However, the other mask that matters is the one that we wear everyday for the people around us, the one that masks our mental health. Mental health has become a struggle for students, as according to “Mental Health America” 9.7% of youth in the U.S. have severe major depression. Programs such as Generation Up are present to assist students with the struggles/challenges they face in their schools, not just with issues around mental health, but anything having to do with the structure, funding, and anything else related to education. Generation Up is a student-led organization that allows for students to speak their voices regarding the conditions in their schools.

Modesto’s Generation Up is led by President Michael Castigador Balerite from Enochs High School. Balerite was inspired by a companion of his who was one of the founders of Generation Up. Generation Up is a larger organization and his work is specific to Modesto. Balerite’s role in Modesto Generation Up is to make sure that the voices of students are heard and that things are running smoothly. Even though Generation Up is solely student led, Balerite said, “There are no issues, because the program can’t be tainted or controlled by any other passions than the people who are invested in it. The students are the staples in their education and it is their right to control it.” This program is led by students for students, meant to serve as an outlook for how education is affecting students. In response to the overwhelming issues, Balerite says, “Once we see more of the problems, we can have changes made. We grow more and more.” You can join GEN Up by being on the look out for upcoming meetings or going to the website [generationup.net](http://generationup.net).

by Richard Zheng



Photo from [generationup.net](http://generationup.net) of a student protest for education funding