



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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VIRTUAL SOLAR CUP PROGRAM CULMINATES WITH CELEBRATION OF STUDENT WINNERS ACROSS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Program promotes sustainability, fosters skills in science, technology, engineering, art and math

Though the pandemic kept Southern California students from competing in person, more than 300 students from 16 high schools throughout the region participated in the virtual 2021 Solar Cup, which featured challenges that tested students' technical, engineering and creative skills.

The competition culminated in a virtual awards ceremony Thursday evening, when students were recognized for first, second and third place honors in each of 10 challenges conducted over the last five months. Among those winning awards in numerous challenges were Lennox Academy in Inglewood, Chino Hills High School, Cabrillo High School in Long Beach, St. Anthony High School in Long Beach, Centennial High School in Corona, Mountain View High School in El Monte, and Downey High School. A full list of winners is available [here](#).

"The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted all of our lives, but I know it has been particularly hard for students, because you weren't able to attend special events like grad night or homecoming," Metropolitan board Chairwoman Gloria D. Gray said during the virtual recognition event. "Despite that, your brilliance and passion never wavered. I want to congratulate you on behalf of Metropolitan and behalf of our Board of Directors."

Solar Cup 2021 students worked in teams, selecting from a menu of activities covering a wide range of fields including robotics, computer-aided design, online gaming development, social media messaging, visual arts and career-building. At the end of the competition, instead of racing boats on Lake Skinner, teams virtually raced the solar vehicles they built with kits during the program. Winners were not only the fastest, but were also judged on their creative use of recycled materials to build the vehicles and transfer mass a 20-foot distance.

"I am very proud of all of the teams that competed this year," Solar Cup Coordinator Julie Miller Kalbacher said. "Although it looked different than in past years, I saw a lot of growth from students and I hope they learned skills that they will take through with them in their futures."

Metropolitan also honored Chino Hills High School Junior Samantha Olivar with the Spirit of Solar Cup "Bart Bezyack Award" for her efforts leading and inspiring her team. The award is named for a student

in the early years of Solar Cup who kept the program going at Canyon High School in Anaheim after his teacher relocated and while he was battling leukemia.

“Bart passed away, but his spirit continues in Solar Cup with this award,” Kalbacher said. “Participating in a competition that is held virtually brings particular challenges and I want to congratulate Samantha for embodying what this award represents through this difficult year for students.”

Solar Cup teams are sponsored by their local water agencies. Metropolitan designs and staffs the program, this year offering a wide variety of activities to build a diverse set of skills that students could use as they begin to explore higher education and chose career paths.

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The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established cooperative that, along with its 26 cities and retail suppliers, provide water for 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.