

Coronado High School Navy JROTC Cadets Win Neptune Olympics



September 10, 2021 - Coronado High School's award-winning NJROTC program is off to a strong start for the 2021-22 school year. The Islander Company cadets began their year at a Leadership Academy over the summer; and then after just one week of school the unit hosted, and won, the Neptune Olympics.

Cadets from seven of the ten San Diego area JROTC units participated in the summer Leadership Academy. Coronado students joined their counterparts from Ramona, Orange Glen, Point Loma, Westview, Serra, and San Ysidro in the three-day camp. Students from the seven schools were divided into platoons (each platoon included one or two students from each school) that worked together to complete challenging events.

NJROTC Senior Naval Science Instructors (SNSI) Coronado's Capt. Patrick Rabun and Orange Glen's LtCdr. Freddie Amos agreed that quality time together for the local programs was much needed after a very difficult 'pandemic' school year. Both SNSI's commented that the camp was successful in developing teamwork and leadership skills, and a great opportunity to form friendships between the programs.

The annual Neptune Olympics were held on September 6 on the beach southeast of Fiddlers Cove on the Silver Strand. Eleven teams from the southern California region competed at the event, which is a fun competition to build camaraderie and teamwork. Teams competed in kayaks, surfboards, paddle boards, group swim, sand castle building, and the cadet favorite- Zodiac Hostage Rescue.

"It's a great opportunity to bond early in the year with different schools and also within teams. Unlike the ultra competitive drill meets that are held 4-5 times per year, the Neptune Olympics are fun!" said Capt. Rabun.

Rabun, along with Senior Chief Tom Hellwig, NSI, teach the 'Naval Science' class at CHS. They take care of official documents and classwork but, "in reality, our students who serve as CO and XO and others in leadership roles are in command of the Islander Company," said Hellwig.

The NJROTC program at CHS began in 2003 and has a history of distinction. "We are now in our 14th consecutive year as a Distinguished Unit [DU]," said Rabun, adding that last year they were a DU with Honors for academic achievement.

Every year the top 20% of programs in each region are recognized as DU's. "There are 58 schools in our 'area' and we compete in various things throughout the year, some of them remote competitions via Zoom," said Rabun. The awards are based on community service, drills and competitions, and academics.

Coronado's NJROTC program is required to have 100 students enrolled in the program by October 1 in order to meet its obligation to the US Navy. "There is a limit, set by congress, of 620 JROTC programs in the country and there are nearly 200 high schools waiting in line to have a unit," explained Rabun. The Navy pays for half of the cost of the program and CUSD pays for the other half.

"This is the first year in a long time where we met our numbers from the very first day. I think the 4x4 bell schedule helped us tremendously. Students have more chances to take things they are interested in than they did before," Rabun commented. "We also have very good Recruiting Officers, one girl and one boy, who reach out to 8th graders and other students to tell them about the program," added Hellwig.

In addition to their academic studies, drill training, backcountry orienteering, competitions, and volunteer commitments, the busy cadets of the Islander Company can often be seen presenting the Colors at events throughout the city.

The Islander Company will hold a brief 9/11 memorial ceremony on the CHS Quad at 4pm on Friday, September 10.