

# Cathedral wins state Olympiad

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THE NATCHEZ DEMOCRAT



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Winners of the state Science Olympiad pose with their trophy. Pictured are front row, from left, Faith Anne Brown, Fisher Iseminger, Mallory Hinson; middle row, Coach Jessie McCann Wallace; back row, Rankin Reynolds, Will Vaughan, Alex Dale, Samuel Freiburger, Kirsten Sanguinetti, Mae Holyoak, Damira McGruder, Piper Mophett, Daphne Sullivan, Markayla Fleming and Ty Tobias. Not pictured is Coach Denise Thibodeaux.

**NATCHEZ** — Cathedral School’s Science Olympiad team won the state tournament of science and technology competition for the second year in a row last week, qualifying the team for a spot at the 2018 Science Olympiad National Tournament in May in Fort Collins, Colorado.

“It’s really nice to have an outlet for competition that’s not athletics-based,” said Piper Mophett, a senior competitor on the Cathedral team. “I don’t play sports, but this is really an outlet for what I’m passionate about.”

Science Olympiad, a national science competition, tests students’ academic acumen in a series of specific studies.

For example, Ty Tobias a senior member of the team tested and won gold in herpetology — the study of snakes, lizards, crocodiles and other amphibians.

“I fell in love with herpetology when I was when I was a child,” Tobias said. “When I was 6 years old, I had a stuffed dinosaur and thought I wanted to be a paleontologist. Then I learned that there are creatures living today that need our help.”

Though herpetology is his passion, Tobias also participated in tests and building competitions in disease detectives, ecology and astronomy.

Tobias likened the competition to a state championship basketball game.

“The Science Olympiads gives academically inclined people the opportunity to compete in athleticstyle event,” Tobias said.

This, he said, would be his first year at the international championship event — which will feature competitors from all 50 states as well as international competitors, such as the team flying in from Japan.

Last week in the state tournament, the Cathedral team won five gold medals, seven silver medals and five bronze medals.

“I cannot even express it in words,” said Jessie Wallace, one of the coaches of the Science Olympiads. “I am so proud of them.”

Coaches Wallace and Denise Thibodeaux began strenuous training with the students in December, Mophett said, but many students continue to train year-round.

Mophett has been a member of Science Olympiads for three years — since she was asked to join during her 10th grade chemistry class.

“I’ve competed in forensics every year,” Mophett said. “I’ve really not stopped preparing trying to learn since I joined.”

The tournaments, Wallace said, introduce students to subjects and people with which they would otherwise rarely get the opportunity to interact.

Wallace said many parents and supporters of the team — such as Elise Mophett and Mark Wallace — volunteer time and effort to training students.

“We couldn’t have done any of this without the volunteers that come,” she said.

The Science Olympiad team is already starting to raise funds for their May trip to Colorado State University for the national tournament, Jessie Wallace said, and any interested supporters can contact the school for further information.