

CVHS Students Compete in National and International Science Fairs

By Lori BODNAR

Spring is science fair season and several students from the Academy of Science and Medicine at Crescenta Valley High School (CVHS) recently competed in science fairs including the California Science and Engineering Fair (CSEF), Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), and the SkillsUSA state competition. Eleventh grader Mahesh Arunachalam participated in all three competitions and won first place in his category at CSEF. Tenth grader Vela Benedicto placed first at the state level in SkillsUSA and will be representing California at the SkillsUSA National science fair from June 19-23.

Arunachalam explored treatments for brain cancer with his science project.

He explained, "My project is focused on mitigating the ongoing lack of treatments for glioblastoma [a certain type of brain cancer] by identifying repurposable drug candidates utilizing computational and wet-lab resources. I worked on my project for around eight months for about five to 10 hours per week."

Over 60 countries competed in ISEF. Arunachalam said, "ISEF was in-person and I could meet people from 62 other

countries. I made friends that I still text today from across the globe. Last year, I competed in the international BioGENEius competition where 14 of us from around the world met. At ISEF I was able to meet with four of them again! Most other fairs are just the judging and awards. ISEF lasted six days and we attended seminars where people from various professions and institutions taught us. There were highly specific sessions such as how to apply to college as a research student or more broad sessions such as how to apply for a patent with your ISEF project. There was only one day where we were judged. The judges at ISEF were highly qualified and provided very insightful feedback."

Tenth grader Benedicto designed an air quality monitor for her science project that she will present at the upcoming SkillsUSA nationals. Benedicto said, "I focused on creating a product for developing regions who may not be able to afford expensive resources. My project aims to close the gap regarding lack of air quality data in those places. I am part Filipino and was initially inspired to combat these air quality problems after personally witnessing it during my time in the Philippines. I have been researching and working on my project since mid-August, though building started sometime in September."

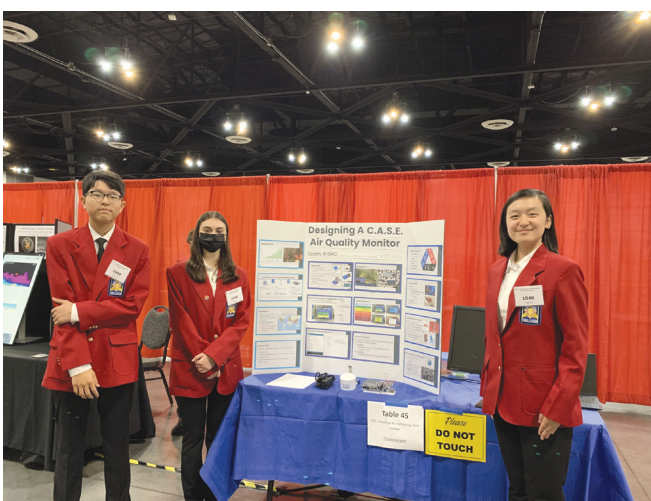
Benedicto will be representing California in Atlanta, Georgia for the SkillsUSA nationals competition June 19-23. Benedicto said, "Regarding SkillsUSA, I am competing in Career Pathways Showcase - Industrial & Engineering Technology. [I am the] first CVHS participant in that category to compete at nationals after placing first in the state of California. I am greatly looking forward to meeting new people to learn about their projects and experiences. I have always loved getting to know people and learning from hearing their stories, advice or thoughts."

The Academy of Science and Medicine provides many opportunities and helped prepare the students for the various science fairs.

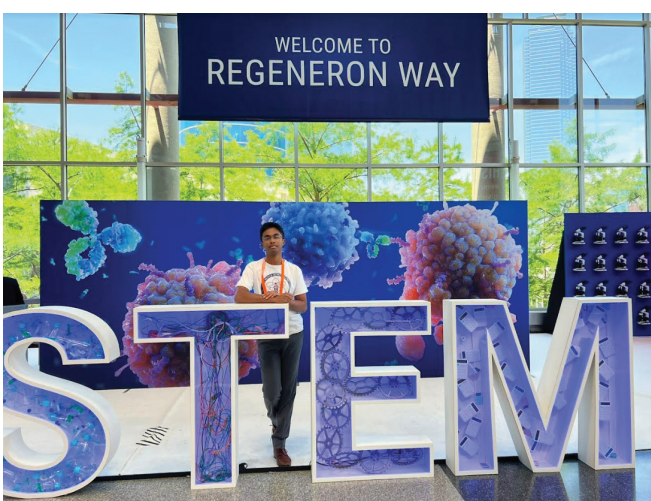
Arunachalam said, "The Academy has provided countless opportunities to explore my current passion of computational biology and the flexibility to try other interests. The Academy also provides connections with specialists, schoolwide science fairs for practice, and much more. I would like to recognize my teacher, Orenda Tuason, for her time and effort she provided from



Mahesh Arunachalam stands next to his science project



Vela Benedicto with her teammates Ethan Lee and Maryam Akelyan by their project



Mahesh Arunachalam by the STEM sign at ISEF Photos provided by Lori BODNAR

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CV Fireworks Extravaganza

Continued from COVER

Avenue. A seating area will be set up in the food court on Ramsdell Avenue. It will be in the parking lot next to the field accessible gate.

CVFA is a locally sponsored and operated organization with roots deep in the community. For years, the CV Chamber of Commerce sponsored the event; however, in 2006 the organization could no longer lead the event and it looked like that would be its end. But then a group of residents in the area met at a local restaurant and came up with a way to keep the annual show going. Residents started making phone calls to friends and local leaders to get the initial financing to continue the show. From this CVFA was born. The event continues to be sponsored by local organizations and financed through donations.

The fireworks show has adjusted over the years. The show began on the CVHS track and field then once the artificial field was in place the audience was moved to La Crescenta Elementary School, which is adjacent to the high school. Then the show

and audience were moved back to the CVHS field.

In the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 the fireworks show was canceled but in 2021 it returned, adjusting to COVID-19 protocols. Though the field was not open to the public the pyrotechnics crew was able to shoot the fireworks very high in the sky allowing people to see them from their homes or by parking along nearby streets.

The show returned to CVHS in 2022 and remains there. The Association continues to work to keep the fireworks show a local event for the foothills community including Montrose and Glendale.

"We only advertise the event locally thru Facebook, local posters and banners and in newspapers. We try to keep the event very family-friendly, especially the entry price. We have not raised the price in years. It's still just \$10, with kids 7 and under free. That's a great value when you compare to other shows that charge up to \$75 just for entry. We couldn't do that if it weren't for the great

support we get from Los Angeles County, City of Glendale and our local residents," Goldsworthy said.

Instead of the traditional fireworks show at the Rose Bowl, this year the stadium will be hosting the LA Galaxy vs. LA Football Club, according to rosebowlstadium.com and visitpasadena.com. There have been reports that there will be fireworks after the game but the traditional show has been "replaced," according to visitpasadena.com.

"I'm not sure what the impact will be with the [Rose] Bowl event being canceled but we do expect a larger crowd," Goldsworthy added. "I would recommend people arrive early. Gates open at 4 p.m. [on July 4]. Throw down a blanket and enjoy some great music."

There is parking on the street and parking spots will be sold for \$5 in the school's parking lot with fees dedicated as a fundraiser for the Prom Plus organization. (Visit promplus.org for more information.)

Tickets for the CV Fireworks Show

can be purchased at Bob Smith Toyota, 3333 Foothill Blvd.; J's Maintenance, 3550 Foothill Blvd.; CV Weekly, 3800 La Crescenta Ave. Ste. 206; and CV Chamber of Commerce, 3131 Foothill Blvd. Ste. D. Tickets will also go on sale in front of the CVHS track and field at Ramsdell Avenue on July 4 beginning at noon. The gate opens at 4 p.m.

There is no alcohol allowed. Bags will be checked at the entrance at the event.

Due to the artificial turf at the school, no food or drink other than water will be allowed on the field and no chairs with pointed or pole-style legs will be allowed on the field. Beach chairs with flat bottoms are allowed.

To donate to the event, send a check in the envelope included in this week's CV Weekly or visit <https://www.cvfireworks.com> and click on Donations..

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explaining the basic concepts in AP biology and biotechnology all the way to the nuanced specifics such as how to convey the importance and reality of my project."

Benedicto said, "Being in the research class within the Academy of Science and Medicine has helped me grow by participating in more professional venues. Through this, I further developed skills such as time management and pushed myself technically by working with Arduino [open-source electronic prototyping platform enabling users to create interactive electronic objects] and other technologies involved in my project. I am especially appreciative of the upperclassmen who were able to share their experiences and advice.

"I would like to sincerely thank my family for their flexibility and support regarding my research schedule, and Orenda Tuason and Alamelu Arunachalam for their patience and time dedication towards the research class."


Both Arunachalam and Benedicto plan on science as their career path.

Arunachalam said, "As of now, due to the connections I have been able to make in the biotechnology sphere in Los Angeles, I am currently hoping to pursue computational biology in LA for my undergrad."

Benedicto added, "I am currently thinking of majoring in an engineering field. I hope to continue my current dream of being able to make the world a better place through STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) now and in the future as well as actively seek to work with mentoring the next generation or engage in research opportunities."

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