



Contact:

Anastasia Shakhidzhanova
(310) 513-3323

Isabel Homberg Reissmeier
(305) 775-3825

Santa Monica High School
601 Pico Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90405
teammarinesamohi@gmail.com
<http://www.teammarine.org/>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Team Marine from Santa Monica High School wins 1st place in international marine debris creative advocacy competition

Santa Monica, CA – October 28, 2019

On Oct. 28, Team Marine, a student-run environmental research and advocacy organization at Santa Monica High School (Samohi) won first place in the international Bow Seat Marine Debris Creative Advocacy Competition; bringing home \$5000. The students involved were Siri Storstein-Norgaard, Ansel Garcia-Langley, Isabel Homberg Reissmeier, Anastasia Shakhidzhanova, Nikita Bahadur, Jay Cho, Kian Taheri, Lilly Chertock, Catherine Todd, Karina Wisen and Daniel Thurmond. Bow Seat launched this annual competition in 2016 with support from a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris Program. Team Marine's campaign consisted of a multifaceted approach targeting three local stakeholders: Samohi students, their district's board of education and Santa Monica community members.

Team Marine launched their project in response to the copious amount of single-use plastics they found in their local storm drain that empties out into the Santa Monica Bay. They recognized that the solution must come from both individuals and governing bodies. However, the plastic pollution and climate crises continue and Team Marine urges governments to continue adopting progressive environmental legislation.

During the 2017-2018 school year, Team Marine conducted a large-scale waste audit of Samohi's campus highlighting the percentage of waste that could be diverted from landfills, finding that 90% of their school's waste could be composted or recycled.

The following school year, the group used the data they collected to present to over 800 ninth-graders at Samohi about the importance of sorting their waste properly, the environmental issue of plastic pollution and the larger issue of climate change, offering ways the students could decrease their own personal plastic consumption and carbon footprint.

Further, Team Marine presented their audit to Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District Board (SMMUSD) and lobbied them to pass a sustainability plan that frames sustainability as a priority for the district. The plan was successfully passed in the spring of 2019, and ensures SMMUSD will make continuous and substantial progress in all areas of sustainability, including implementing environmental education into classrooms, educating the next generation of environmental stewards.

As the culmination of their year-long endeavor, Team Marine engaged with their greater community in an installation of their Giant Plastic Bottle sculpture, an interactive 11-foot structure composed of over 600 plastic bottles on the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica on June 16. Hundreds of people stopped by to discuss the issues behind single-use plastics and solutions individuals could take. At the event, the group gathered signatures for environmental legislation including AB #1080, SB #54 and SB #424, offered an opportunity for individuals to confess their “plastic sins,” a form of engagement modeled after the phrase “there is no recovery without confession” and pledge to be single-use plastic free. To the team’s disappointment, the aforementioned bills have not been passed yet, but the team will continue to advocate for them.

Team Marine plans to donate 14% of their prize to their non-profit partners including Algalita Marine Research and Education Foundation, Surfrider Foundation, Plastic Pollution Coalition, Heal the Bay, 5 Gyres, Climate Action Santa Monica and the Story of Stuff. In addition, they will use a portion of the funds to expand lobby and outreach efforts.

Team Marine would like to thank SMMUSD Sustainability Coordinator (Caroline Coster), Samohi principal (Dr. Antonio Shelton), the SMMUSD Board of Education, and mentor and Samohi science teacher Benjamin Kay.