



New Mexico Activities Association Student Spotlight

East Mountain High School Places Fifth at the 2015-16 IPPF World Championships

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

East Mountain High School students, Emma Hotz, Jessie Linder, and Gina Sanchez, spent the weekend of April 1-3 competing in the final rounds of the International Public Policy Forum. Their performance resulted in a final ranking of 5th place in the world.

"I was incredibly proud of the work these girls completed," Trey Smith, East Mountain's speech and debate advisor said. "It was also an eye-opening experience for me as a coach to have the only all-female team left in the competition. Debate, like many fields, has been male-dominated for a long time. It was cool to watch them break down some barriers. Also, the other teams left in the competition were large, well-known public and private schools from across the country. I loved being able to represent New Mexico in this international education arena."

Founded in 2001 by the law firm of Brewer, Attorneys & Counselors, the International Public Policy Forum (IPPF) is the only contest that gives high school students around the globe the opportunity to engage in written and oral debates on issues of public policy. Now jointly administered by the Brewer Foundation and New York University, this program is available to all public and private high schools for free. The teams debated the IPPF topic: "Resolved: Genetically modified organisms are essential to global food security."

The final debate was held at The Harold Pratt House in New York. It was judged by a panel that included Brewer, New York University President Emeritus John Sexton, and Jon Paul Lupo, New York City Director of the Office of City Legislative Affairs for the Mayor's Office.

The competition began in October, and the students had to submit a 2,800 word essay on the topic: GMOs are essential to global food security. After hundreds of essays were submitted from 29 countries around the globe, EMHS qualified to the top 64 of all schools.

In the subsequent rounds, schools volley papers back and forth via e-mail. A panel of three judges reviewed the essays in the order they were presented (affirmative constructive, negative constructive, affirmative rebuttal, negative rebuttal) and selected the advancing teams.

In the Round of 64, EMHS defeated Shenzhen Academy of International Education from Shenzhen, China. In the Round of 32, EMHS defeated Gimnazija Bezigrad High School from Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Both wins were unanimous decisions for East Mountain. In the Round of 16, EMHS defeated Davidson Academy of Reno, Nevada.

The East Mountain team earned an all-expenses paid trip to New York City to debate the remaining eight teams in person.



“Competing against the best teams in the world was an amazing experience and getting to visit New York City was something I’ll never forget.” Sanchez said.

Hotz added, “Making it to New York was an amazing experience and I loved being able to represent New Mexico and our school. The hard work was definitely worth it.”

This was the third time East Mountain High School qualified to the Elite Eight in this global competition.