



Communications & Government Relations
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MEDIA RELEASE

Central High's Air Rifle Team State Champs - again!

February 12, 2021 - The Central High School Navy JROTC Air Rifle Teams won two state air rifle championships – the Florida Navy JROTC Championship and the Florida CMP (Civilian Marksmanship Program) Championship. These most recent victories make it the third consecutive year the team has won the coveted titles. Not only has Central High nabbed the top team titles, but also the top individual athletes in each event. The Hernando School Board honored the air rifle teams at its meeting on Feb. 9, where the team trophies and cadet medals were presented.

"If you want to know what a dream team is, here they are," Master Gunnery Sergeant Michael Arnett, Central High ROTC instructor, said at the School Board meeting. "But this is no dream, they are standing right here!"

"Central's JROTC team has made excellence the foundation of their program. Not only are these cadets victorious in competition, they are also outstanding student leaders on their campus," Superintendent John Stratton said.

"Our cadets continuously display the level of discipline and determination that is required to achieve this level of performance," Central High Principal Kelly Slusser said. She also praised the efforts of the team instructor, Master Gunnery Sgt. Michael Arnett. "He has been with this team for quite some time and built a winning team at Central High School. His hard work and dedication in taking our cadets' performance to nationwide recognition goes above and beyond."

The 2021 Navy Championships included teams from 66 Navy JROTC programs throughout the state.

- Central's team took first place overall
- Cadets Hayle Carlisle (team captain), Kyle Chilson (co-captain), Evan Elders and Amanda Cook. Chilson won first place overall for individual athletes with 276 points (out of 300), with Carlisle taking second place overall with 268 points.

The 2021 CMP Championships included teams from Navy, Army, Marines, Air Force, 4H and other civilian groups throughout Florida.

- Central's team that took first place overall
- Cadets Carlisle, Chilson, Bailey Birchler and Kaleb St. Clair. Birchler took first place overall for individual athletes with 548 points (out of 600), and Carlisle took second place, with 544 points.

Since 2018, Central's air rifle team has dominated both state and regional competitions and have done phenomenally at national competitions. During the 2019 Navy JROTC Nationals, Central's team won 4th place overall in the nation, with Cadet Bailey Birchler placing eighth overall in the nation. To put those numbers into perspective, that competition included more than 800 Navy JROTC units with more than 80,000 cadets.

All competitions this year are held virtually and the cadets are now participating in the Secretary of the Navy Postal Competition, currently underway, and as of mid-February, Central's team is leading by 60 points. The winners will be announced by Feb. 22 and, should Central's team win, will move on to nationals.



Group: Master Gunnery Sgt. Mike Arnett, Breanne Flynn, Bailey Birchler, Hayle Carlisle, Amanda Cook, Lt. Commander Christian Cruz and Superintendent John Stratton. In back: Kaleb St. Clair, Ethan Hughes and Andrew Couch.

Photo 2: John Stratton presents CMP medal to Bailey Birchler