

LOCAL

United South ROTC takes national drill title

Times staff reports

The Junior ROTC Marine drill team of United South High School is No. 1 in the United States.

The United South Marine cadets were judged overall champions at the recent eighth annual high school drill team competition in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Col. Carter Hutson, senior ROTC instructor at United South, took a boys drill team and a girls drill team on an 11-day trip to Florida. The teams were joined by a school administrator, David Canales, and several student assistants. They returned late Friday with several trophies, including the overall national championship award for the Challenger Division.

"The program is in its third year," Hutson said Tuesday. "Laredo hasn't had a national champion since 1973 when a combination Martin-Nixon team called the Baldies won the nationals."

The United South cadets competed against drill units from 45 high schools across the United States in the Challenger Division. The Masters group drew 28 teams.

Enrique Jasso, a United South senior, is the drill team commander and battalion commander.

"Enrique has been in the program since the start three years ago," Hutson said. "Some of the kids were at the nationals for the first time last week."

The United South armed drill unit placed third in nationals last year.

Teams compete in five categories, inspection, regulation drill, platoon exhibition drill, squad exhibition and color guard team. The United South Marines took first in the inspection phase, first in platoon drill, first in squad exhibition and fifth in color guard phase.

"The regulation drill involves the team marching through a set of commands. All teams do the same thing routine," Hutson said. "It's a regulation drill done by the manual and graded by the manual."

Hutson said the platoon exhibition drill involves 12 cadets performing to the lead of a commanding cadet.

"It's what you make up," he said. "It's fancy drill. The squad exhibition involves nine cadets with a team commander. It's also a fancy drill."

Hutson said the color guard phase involves two cadets with a flag and two cadets with rifles as they perform a set routine. He said the routine is the same for all competing units.

"The competition awards trophies in individual events first through fifth. Then there's the overall champion. Trophies go to the national champion and the national runner-up champion.

Deerfield High School of Florida finished runner-up to Laredo United South in the Challenger Division. The Masters Division was won by San Antonio Churchill. Another San Antonio team, Roosevelt, was the Masters runner-up.

Members of the United South boys drill team are Enrique Jasso, commander, Zeus Courtois, Miguel Dominguez, Hugo Espinoza, Oscar Ramirez, Fernando Reyes, Fernando Salas, Jesus Valdez, Prudencio Solis, Juan Lopez, Juan Rodriguez, Alex Lozano, Marco Mondragon, Albert Madrigal, Ricky Arriaga, Christopher Rivera, Juan Vega and Ramiro Ibarra.

Members of the girls' team are Josie Garza, Maria Lara, Elizabeth Hernandez, Gloria Gonzalez, Betty Lopez, Marta Garcia, Cristina Reyes, Judith Garza, Nancy Cardenas, Alma de la Rosa, Jennifer Montes, commander, Angie Morales, Melissa Butanda, Rosario Rodriguez and Vanessa de la Torre.

Team aides for the boys are David Moreno, Alex Vasquez, Luis de la Cruz, Angel Gonzalez, Luis Soria and Cesar Lopez. Helping the girls team were Sandra Chavez, Priscilla Caballero and Sanjuanita Sosa.

"This is the prestigious meet at the national level," Hutson said. "The competition in both divisions had a total of 100 high schools. Everything was indoors in excellent facilities of the Daytona Beach Civic Center. It drew 10,000 spectators. It's a first class operation."

Hutson said the goal for next year is to have the girls' team going for the title. He said the boys, as national champs, will move up to the Masters Division.

--Editor Odie Arambula contributed to the article.



Times staff photo by CUATE SANTOS

Lions' scholarships

The Noon Lions Club will give three scholarships to Laredo students who presented a paper and spoke about diabetes. Lions Club officers Roland Hicks and Kevin Romo flank Monica Cantu, Alexander High; Mike Herrera IV, Alexander High; and Eliana Segovia of Martin High.