



# El Monte Union High School District

Community Committed to College and Career

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Fruit Tree Planting Ceremony Bolsters El Monte Union's 'Go Green' Initiative**

Trees will benefit Mountain View farm-to-table culinary arts program

**EL MONTE** – When Mountain View High School seniors Fatima Barajas and Alejandra Barboza created the school's Gardening Club, they envisioned a campus that would embrace sustainable living while providing comfort and shade for students and community members.

The pair had the opportunity to bring their vision to life on Sept. 26, when they participated in a tree planting ceremony in which more than 60 students wielded shovels and rakes to plant 30 fruit trees donated by the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation.

"This is very exciting. We started the club hoping to bring a community garden to Mountain View, and now we are a step closer," Barajas said. "We want to bring people together so they can get to know each other and socialize."

The fruit trees will contribute to the school's farm-to-table culinary arts, engineering and digital journalism career technical education activities, bolster the school's National Wildlife Federation Eco-Schools designation and expand the District's ongoing efforts to "Go Green" by creating a healthier, more sustainable environment in which to study, live and work.

Trees encompass a wide selection of hybrid varieties, including common fruits like mango, peach, apple, pear, guava, cherry, plum, fig, pomegranate and avocado, and more exotic fruits like jujube and cherimoya. When ripe, the fruit will be incorporated into meals prepared by Mountain View's culinary arts students.

Fruit Tree Planting Foundation chief arborist Rico Montenegro spoke to the students about the importance of sustainable living and the benefits of planting trees in predominantly urban areas.

"When you drive through a community with a lot of trees, you can sense the pride of the city," said Montenegro, who demonstrated proper tree-planting techniques to the students. "Planting a tree is easy, and the positive impact on the environment is tremendous."

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Parent Laurel Bryan recently moved with her family from Colorado to El Monte. Bryan's daughter, Zoey Stonestreet, is a Mountain View sophomore. When Bryan, who was active in the sustainable living movement in Colorado, heard about the tree planting, she picked up a shovel and volunteered to help.

"I love that Mountain View is educating students about learning to grow their own food," Bryan said. "It's so vital for people to become self-sustainable. I'm very happy to see this event at Zoey's new school."

Through El Monte Union's "Go Green" initiative, the District has brought electric car charging stations to all of its comprehensive high schools and is installing solar panel carports at the majority of its campuses. The panels are expected to generate over 60 percent of the District's annual energy needs.

In 2015, El Monte Union was designated as a "Green Achiever" district by the California Department of Education, the highest honor in the CDE's Green Ribbon School program, and received the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon District Sustainability award.

"Our students are passionate about making their city and the planet a better place to live, work and go to school," Mountain View High School Principal Jose Marquez said. "They understand the importance of being eco-friendly and have helped pushed the District to pursue partnerships with like-minded organizations like the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation, so that they can leave a lasting legacy."

### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**100118\_EMUHS\_D\_MVHSTREES1:** Mountain View High School students learn the proper tree-planting technique from Fruit Tree Planting Foundation chief arborist Rico Montenegro before planting 30 fruit trees donated by the Foundation during a special ceremony on Sept. 26. More than a dozen hybrid varieties were planted, bolstering the school's National Wildlife Federation Eco-Schools designation.

**100118\_EMUHS\_D\_MVHSTREES2:** Mountain View High School students get ready to plant a fruit tree, one of 30 trees donated by the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation during a special ceremony on Sept. 26, part of El Monte Union's ongoing "Go Green" initiative. When ripe, the fruit will be incorporated into meals prepared by Mountain View's culinary arts students.

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*The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.*