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NEWS RELEASE

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Award-Winning Fontana Unified High School Theater Students Set Sail on Spring Production of 'Moana'

FONTANA, CA – Looking to draw on their success at the recent California Educational Theater Association (CETA) High School Festival, the award-winning Jurupa Hills High School Players of the Palace theater group is preparing to set sail on a wondrous and fraught journey across the high seas during their spring production of the musical, “Moana JR.,” to be staged in March.

Based on the 2016 Disney animated classic “Moana,” the musical will highlight the full range of talents of the Players as they sing and dance their way through an epic journey of self-discovery and camaraderie, fresh off a production of L. Frank Baum’s “The Wonderful World of Oz” that was named the No. 1 fall production at the CETA festival in January.

This is the third year that Jurupa Hills High has taken home CETA’s top award. The Players of the Palace won in 2014 with their performance of “The Boys Next Door” and again in 2016 with “Inherit The Wind.”

“I am so proud of all of my kids. They never cease to amaze me. I am blessed to come to work each day with these incredible practitioners,” Jurupa Hills theater director James Griffin said. “‘Moana’ is going to be huge. Any chance that I get to bring Disney magic to our stage is a treat. I’m most excited about the grandeur of the show and all of the special effects that will be used to bring our story to life.”

The production of “Moana JR.” will showcase not only students’ acting talents, but also the skills developed in Jurupa Hills’ technical theater courses. For every Jurupa Hills High production, students design and build sets, direct light and sound, create costumes and even create their own wigs.

It was the combination of acting and technical skills that compelled CETA judges to lavish praise on nearly every aspect of the production of “Oz,” with one adjudicator commenting that it was the finest production they had ever seen.

In particular, the portrayals of Dorothy and the Wicked Witch of the West, performed by sophomore Amy Griffin and junior Emily Morales respectively, impressed the judges for their honesty, passion and creativity. Griffin and Morales both earned Adjudicator Awards for their performances, the highest honor CETA awards a student.

“I have never performed for so many people in my life,” Morales said. “Our cast worked so hard to bring ‘Oz’ to the stage. We started rehearsals in August.”

Additionally, Jurupa Hills junior Sophia Haghani received two awards, an Adjudicator Award for her help in fabricating the numerous puppets employed in the production, and an award for Outstanding Mainstage Technician. Junior Anyssa Valles and junior Lana Biscan received Director's Awards and Certificates of Excellence were awarded to the entire cast, crew and production staff.

Jurupa Hills High School offers career technical education (CTE) courses in sectors such as the arts, media and entertainment, helping students jumpstart their journey to college and career. CTE pathways include acting, dance and production and managerial arts, which provide hands-on learning, foster creativity and set the stage for professional success.

"The Players of the Palace continue to set a high bar for success, and have established themselves as one of the premier high school theater troupes in California," Jurupa Hills Principal Antonio Viramontes said. "Congratulations to James Griffin and the Players for another triumphant performance, and thank you to the Players for providing their fellow Spartans with memories that will last a lifetime."

Tickets for "Moana JR." are \$10 and \$15 can be purchased online [here](#). The dates and times are as follows:

- Friday, March 10, 7 p.m.
- Saturday, March 11, 1 p.m. (matinee) & 7 p.m.
- Thursday, March 16, 7 p.m.
- Friday, March 17, 7 p.m.
- Saturday, March 18, 1 p.m. (matinee) & 7 p.m.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_JURUPAHILLSTHEATER1: The Jurupa Hills High School's Players of the Palace production of L. Frank Baum's "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" was named the No. 1 fall production at the California Educational Theater Association High School Festival, held in January. The performance received a number of accolades, including three Adjudicator Awards for acting and special effects, and a Certificate of Excellence for the entire cast and crew. Jurupa Hills' next production is "Moana JR.", to be staged in March.

FUSD_JURUPAHILLSTHEATER2: Jurupa Hills High School junior Emily Morales portrays the Wicked Witch of the West in the school's fall production of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," a performance that earned her an Adjudicator Award during the California Educational Theater Association High School Festival, held in January. Jurupa Hills' spring production will be "Moana JR.," a musical based on the 2016 Disney animated classic, "Moana," to be staged in March.

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