



PRESS RELEASE

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Norwalk-La Mirada Unified Teacher Inspires Females to Pursue STEM Careers

Kelly Garcia Recognized as Teacher and Woman of the Year

Norwalk-La Mirada Unified female students are empowered to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) with the help of Teacher on Special Assignment Project Lead The Way (PLTW) coordinator Kelly Garcia, who was recently honored as Teacher of the Year by PLTW and Woman of the Year by Assembly Majority Floor Leader Ian Calderon.

“Ms. Garcia definitely influenced me in choosing a pathway in STEM,” Los Alisos eighth-grader Allison Conrad said. “She would tell us how many women are in the field and that it’s not a man’s job – girls can do it too.”

Garcia started her career at Norwalk-La Mirada Unified as a science and engineering teacher at Los Alisos Middle School six years ago, after serving in the U.S. Navy as a cryptologic technician maintenance petty officer second class and as a District parent volunteer. She then became one of three teachers certified to teach the PLTW Gateway Program before becoming a PLTW coordinator.

“I love what PLTW does for our students – they not only have an opportunity to be successful, but learn how to fail and get back on their feet,” Garcia said. “We have students doing amazing things because of PLTW.”

Outside the classroom, Garcia trains teachers at Norwalk-La Mirada Unified and across the country in adopting PLTW pathways and updating educators with new skills and current materials to enhance school curriculum. In the classroom, Garcia challenges students to see the opportunities available to them through STEM careers.

“Ms. Garcia likes to push us to our limits so that we know what we are capable of,” Los Alisos Middle School eighth-grader Brianna Lozada said. “She makes the effort to make sure you can be on your own.”

As a way to encourage parents to support their daughters to become involved in traditionally male-dominated careers, Garcia collaborates with District teachers to organize annual events, such as Female Engineering Day and Mother-Daughter Engineering Workshop and Tea, providing information about rewarding STEM career opportunities. As part of PLTW professional development workshops, Garcia also informs educators on hidden gender biases in the field and offers strategies and tools to better engage female students.

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“Girls are always under-represented, and I want to reach out and engage them better,” Garcia said. “Students already know what they want to do in elementary school, and we need to support them in pursuing their passion at an early age so that they are on the right pathway through high school and beyond.”

When recognized as Woman of the Year by Calderon, Garcia used the opportunity to speak with lawmakers and legislators about education, continuing to advocate for her community and students.

“Congratulations to Kelly for being recognized as one of the top educators across the state,” NLMUSD Superintendent Dr. Hasmik Danielian said. “Thanks to Kelly and all of our teachers and administrators throughout our schools – our students are entering high school with a strong foundation in STEM and are empowered to pursue a career in anything they want.”

PHOTOS:

032817_NLMUSD_PLTWTEACHER1: Teacher on Special Assignment Project Lead The Way (PLTW) coordinator Kelly Garcia accepts her PLTW Teacher of the Year Award. Pictured left to right: PLTW Senior Vice President and Engagement Officer David Dimmett, NLMUSD College and Career Pathway Director Joanne Jung, Garcia, PLTW CEO Dr. Vince Bertram, NLMUSD teacher Angelica Gunderson and NLMUSD Assistant Superintendent Educational Services Dr. Al Clegg.

032817_NLMUSD_PLTWTEACHER2: Teacher on Special Assignment Project Lead The Way (PLTW) coordinator Kelly Garcia (center) accepts her Woman of the Year award from Assembly Majority Floor Leader Ian Calderon (left of Garcia).

032817_NLMUSD_PLTWTEACHER3: Teacher on Special Assignment Project Lead The Way (PLTW) coordinator Kelly Garcia reviews a robotics project with Los Alisos Middle School students.

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