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CONTACT: Lauren Creiman, (909) 833-9853

Bonita Unified High School Senior Reaches for the Stars, Receives \$50,000 Edison Scholarship

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Bonita High School senior Junze “Jenny” Zhang was a sixth-grade English learner when her family moved from China to the United States. Even as Zhang worked to master a new language, she was already immersing herself in research that would lead her to focus on the destructiveness of climate change and the possibility of establishing colonies within our solar system.

Zhang’s enthusiasm for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subjects, willingness to put in long hours of research, and determination to find solutions for global environmental issues were rewarded when she was named a 2024 Edison Scholar, which will provide her with \$50,000 to support her dream of attending the California Institute of Technology (Cal Tech) to study aerospace engineering.

Zhang was in her Advanced Placement (AP) Statistics class when a group of people – including her family, principal Kenny Ritchie, and Edison International VP of Technology Data Albert Ma – entered the classroom to make the surprise announcement in front of her peers. Ma presented Zhang with a check for \$50,000 while her classmates applauded her achievement. Zhang is one of just 30 Southern California high school students to receive the award.

“It is a great honor to be chosen for an Edison scholarship,” Zhang said. “I was inspired to apply for the scholarship because of the emphasis on STEM, which is right up my alley. I believe it is our duty to use science to find solutions to environmental crises, and to promote peace throughout our society. I also want to inspire more females to go into STEM fields.”

Zhang, who has a 4.7 GPA and has taken more than a dozen AP classes, has a passion for STEM that has led her to serve as an intern for Stanford University’s Artificial Intelligence in Medicine and Imaging (AIMI) Center, attend Harvard University’s Secondary Summer School program and introduce young girls to robotics as a volunteer coach for Magikid. Zhang is also the president and co-founder of Bonita’s Astronomy Club and NASA Club.

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NEWS RELEASE

As a freshman at Bonita, Zhang contributed a prize-winning essay to the Chinese-American Engineers and Scientists Association of Southern California (CESASC) that led to an internship conducting research for Cal Tech professor and JPL scientist Dr. Jonathan H. Jiang, where she assisted in co-authoring an article published in the Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences, exploring the possibility of placing human settlements throughout our solar system to escape climate change devastation that might lead to extinction.

Zhang is also an accomplished athlete and musician who has spent four years on BHS' varsity tennis and track & field teams as well as four years as a keyboardist in the school's Jazz Ensemble and three years as a keyboardist and flautist in Bonita's pit orchestra, appearing in the spring musicals, "Legally Blonde" and "Little Shop of Horrors." Zhang has also done extensive volunteering through Bonita's National Honor Society and California Scholarship Federation clubs.

"Jenny is one of the brightest and strongest students I have seen in 25-plus years as counselor at Bonita. It's more than the academics, it's the passion she puts into everything she does, the depth and breadth of her achievements," Bonita High counselor Kelly McGarvey said. "Jenny is not only a scholar and a leader, but also a person of high integrity, hard-working and humble."

Zhang committed to Cal Tech after being accepted to UCLA, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, Harvey Mudd, Columbia University, Cornell University and the University of Michigan.

This is the second consecutive year that a Bonita High student has received an Edison scholarship. In 2023, Jeremiah Weetly became Bonita's first-ever Edison scholar. Weetly is currently studying mechanical engineering at Rutgers University.

"We couldn't be prouder of Jenny and everything she has been able to accomplish while still in high school," Ritchie said. "Jenny is a leader and a role model, and not afraid to speak up for what she believes in. At Bonita, we've been blessed to have two Edison scholars, which is a testament to our academic culture, our high-achieving students and our dedicated teachers and staff."

PHOTO:

BUSD_EDISON_ZHANG: Bonita High School senior Junze "Jenny" Zhang is all smiles after being named a 2024 Edison Scholar and receiving a \$50,000 scholarship to support her dream of attending an elite university to student aerospace engineering.

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