



Bonita Unified

SCHOOL DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bonita Unified Culinary Arts Students Find Recipe for Success at Cooking Competition

LA VERNE/SAN DIMAS – The Bonita Unified culinary arts program is truly a family affair. Led by the husband-and-wife team of Nick and Laurie Brandler – instructors at San Dimas High and Bonita High, respectively – the pair are preparing their students for highly competitive food service jobs through a rigorous curriculum that encompasses all aspects of running a restaurant.

The Brandlers and their students found the recipe for success during the 2020 Virtual ProStart Cup held in April, winning several major awards including California ProStart Student of the Year and California ProStart Instructor of the Year, with first-place finishes in the Innovation Cup and Management Cup competitions.

Bonita High School senior Ryder Ortiz was named California ProStart 2020 Student of the Year for his overall excellence in culinary, innovation and management skills. Ortiz was awarded a \$2,000 scholarship from the BJ's Restaurant Foundation.

"This is amazing because I feel like the hard work I have put in has been recognized," Ortiz said. "ProStart has given me opportunities I didn't realize were out there and set me up to become a future industry leader. I owe it all to my teacher, Mrs. Brandler, because she has made it fun and enjoyable to learn."

Nick Brandler was named California ProStart 2020 Educator of the Year for inspiring his students to perform at peak efficiency. Brandler will receive a \$1,000 scholarship for professional development from the BJ's Restaurant Foundation.

"I am honored to be chosen for this award. I have had the privilege of working with some amazing kids. Seeing them achieve at such a high level is indescribable," Brandler said. "It's incredibly rewarding. My wife Laurie really paved the way for the culinary program. Without her none of this would be possible."

The Brandlers came to the District after long careers in the restaurant industry. Laurie arrived in Bonita in 2006 and established the program. Nick followed in 2015. Laurie Brandler was named California ProStart Educator of the Year in 2016.

"I am truly impressed and proud of my student's dedication and work ethic. They have been preparing for this competition for five months and exemplify what it is to be a Bearcat," Brandler said. "I feel very honored to be a part of their journey. That is what ProStart is all about, giving students the opportunity to find their path to making a positive impact on this world."



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The ProStart Cup, an annual competition with challengers from high schools all across California, was scheduled for mid-March. The COVID-19 health crisis compelled the organization – which is sponsored by the California Restaurant Association and the BJ's Restaurant Foundation – to switch to a virtual format.

This proved challenging to students. Instead of being able to give their presentations in person in front of a panel of culinary experts, the students had to adjust to a written format.

“Nick and Laurie Brandler personify the Bonita Unified mission of providing high quality education that prepares our students for success in college, career and beyond,” Superintendent Carl J. Coles said. “They are truly amazing, as are their students who, year after year, display creativity and professionalism and an enthusiasm to learn. Congratulations to all of our scholars.”

See a complete list of Bonita Unified student winners below.

PHOTOS

Bonita_Cooking_1_05_13_2020: Bonita High School senior Ryder Ortiz competes in the 2020 California ProStart cup, winning Student of the Year and earning a \$2,000 scholarship from the BJ's Restaurant Foundation.

Bonita_Cooking_2_05_13_2020: San Dimas High School ProStart team prepare for several competitions, testing their creative thinking and innovation skills, during the 2020 ProStart Cup.

Bonita_Cooking_3_05_13_2020: Bonita Unified School District's culinary arts program is led by Nick and Laurie Brandler at San Dimas High and Bonita High; their effort and the effort of their students is recognized by several major awards, including California ProStart Student of the Year and California ProStart Instructor of the Year, and with first-place finishes in the Innovation Cup and Management Cup competitions during the 2020 Virtual ProStart Cup held in April.

DISTRICT WINNERS

San Dimas senior Laura Siu won first place in Innovation Cup for Split Cup, a coffee pot with an internal divider that creates two reservoirs within the pot. Siu will receive a scholarship of \$5,000 to \$8,000.

Bonita juniors Jasper Coronado and Domanique Rosales won fifth place in Innovation Cup for Rapid Roller, a portable machine that rolls napkins. Both students will receive scholarships of \$1,000 to \$3,000.

San Dimas seniors Aaron Smith, Alyssa Duarte and Paul Pignotti won first place in Management Cup for Taco Spot, a modern twist on casual dining and traditional street tacos. They will receive scholarships of \$5,000 to \$8,000. They will also receive an additional \$1,500 from the National Restaurant Association.



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San Dimas senior Sophia Leon and juniors Nathan Rudy and Ali Yassine won third place in Management Cup for Frequent Fryer, which elevates French fries into a memorable meal for the entire family. They will receive scholarships of \$3,000 to \$6,000.

San Dimas senior Brigette Cruz, juniors Travis Swailes, Erika Barragan, Jeremy Carrillo and sophomore Kiley Shaffer took fifth place in Culinary Cup and will receive \$3,000 scholarships.

Scholarship amounts vary depending on which college the student will attend.



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