



# Bonita Unified

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

115 W. Allen Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773 ★ (909) 971-8200 ★ [do.bonita.k12.ca.us/](http://do.bonita.k12.ca.us/)

### NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

June 14, 2023

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## Bonita Unified Restaurant Management Students Make Debut at ProStart Nationals, Capture Third Place

**SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE** – The idea for a fast-casual restaurant that invites customers to satisfy their guilty pleasures by indulging in artisan-crafted comfort food brought national attention to the San Dimas High School ProStart culinary arts program, when judges bestowed the creators of the fictitious “Cheat Day” business proposal a third-place finish at the 2023 National ProStart Invitational, held in Washington D.C. this spring.

San Dimas High ProStart restaurant management students, known as “Team California” during the three-day event that gathered the top high school culinary arts students from across the United States, jumped for joy and hugged each other when the announcement was made by National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation president Rob Gifford.

This is the first year that a Bonita Unified school has participated in the ProStart Nationals, and the highest finish for a California team in 10 years. Of more than 1,800 ProStart schools located in 50 states, San Dimas High ranks third in the country in restaurant management.

“We worked our tails off getting ready for this. When the time came, our kids really knocked it out of the park and I could not be prouder of them,” San Dimas ProStart teacher Nick Brandler said. “We went head-to-head with technical schools, trade specific high schools and CTE academies, schools that advance to the national level nearly every year. This is truly a groundbreaking and remarkable accomplishment for Bonita Unified.”

San Dimas High Class of 2023 graduates Wilson Chen, Joshua Wong and Alec Joseph, junior Christina Jones and sophomore Gabriel Costa received medals and Coca-Cola portable scholarships of \$3,500 to use toward any school of their choosing, as well as additional scholarship money if they choose to attend college to earn a degree in culinary or hospitality-related majors.

ProStart students who complete their coursework already receive work-ready certificates and a \$5,000 scholarship to attend Cal Poly Pomona’s Collins College of Hospitality Management, meaning that the winning students could receive a full-ride to college if they continue to pursue education in the culinary field.

“ProStart and, most importantly, Mr. Brandler, changed my life,” Chen said. “Competing has been the most challenging and rewarding part of my life.”

“Cheat Day,” with its tagline of “because you deserve it,” attracts potential customers with a menu stacked with bacon burgers, stuffed quesadillas, mac and cheese and cinnamon rolls, augmented by catchy names such as “Love Me TENDERS” and “HAWT Chicken Sando,” and catchy thought bubbles that play up the guilty pleasure aspect of the dining experience, such as “INDULGE” and “We Won’t Tell.”

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An app-based loyalty rewards program – called a “Cheat Streak” – brings customers back by allowing them to redeem loyalty points for free food. The marketing plan boasts a return on investment of over 150%.

The Bonita Unified Culinary and Restaurant Management programs, led by Nick Brandler at San Dimas High and his wife Laurie Brandler at Bonita High, worked together to help prepare the culinary students for the national competition. The Brandlers came to the District after long careers in the restaurant industry. Laurie arrived in Bonita in 2006 and established the program, with Nick arriving in 2015. Both Laurie and Nick have been named ProStart California Educators of the Year, in 2016 and 2020, respectively. Also in 2020, Nick Brandler was named runner-up for ProStart National Educator of the Year.

“This is a milestone moment for Bonita Unified’s ProStart culinary program, and the beginning of what we hope is an annual tradition of seeing our students being recognized at the highest levels for their inspiring work,” Bonita Unified Superintendent Matt Wien said. “Congratulations again to Nick and Laurie Brandler, whose dedication to their craft and passion for education has allowed many students to realize their dream of entering the culinary field.”

#### PHOTO:

**BUSD\_PROSTART1:** San Dimas High School ProStart Culinary and Restaurant Management students and their instructor Nick Brandler represented California at the 2023 National ProStart Invitational and were rewarded with a third-place finish for their business proposal for “Cheat Day,” a fictitious restaurant that invites customers to indulge in comfort food. It was the first time that San Dimas High School had participated in the national competition, held in Washington D.C. in the spring.



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