



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 18, 2021

CONTACT: Jahmal Corner PHONE: 206-579-4432

Lynwood Unified Graduates Honor Those Lost During Emotional Return to In-Person Commencement Ceremonies

Lynwood – Lynwood Unified School District honored the Class of 2021 from four schools from June 14-16 during emotional ceremonies that honored both achievement and perseverance through loss.

Nearly 750 Students and families from Firebaugh, Lynwood, Vista and Pathway high schools gathered on Lynwood Unified's District Field for their long-anticipated in-person commencement after last year's graduating class was limited to a virtual ceremony due to COVID-19 safety measures.

The impact of the past year could be felt during the ceremonies and was especially challenging for Lynwood High School valedictorian Alexa Escamilla who lost her father during the pandemic. Despite the tragedy, Escamilla earned a 4.53 GPA, ran a student-led tutoring service to support her peers, and will attend UCLA in the fall.

"Each individual has their own story – their own loved one that was affected," said Escamilla. "My father was and continues to be one of the biggest influences in my life. He taught me the importance of hard work and how it would lead me forward no matter what path I choose to take."

Lynwood High celebrated 360 graduating seniors over two ceremonies on June 16, which also included salutatorian America Castañeda who will continue her education at UC Berkeley.

Firebaugh High School's 240 graduates walked across the stage to receive their diplomas on June 15, led by valedictorian Angelica Pena and salutatorian Evelyn Ramos. Pena plans to major in mechanical engineering at UC Berkeley, and Ramos, a 2021 Gates Scholar, will attend USC.

"We all know that the journey here has not been easy," Pena said. "The pandemic completely changed our high school experience and brought forth many hardships. We had to stay strong and adapt to a new normal; however, the Class of 2021 has shown resilience and together we can finally say we made it."

The Firebaugh event also featured a sobering moment when it recognized senior Edgar Limas, who died from cancer. The Limas family was presented Edgar's diploma, cap and gown, and honored by the Board of Education.

The mission of **Lynwood Unified School District**, the model urban school district, is to ensure each student fearlessly achieves their highest academic and personal aspirations while contributing to a diverse, global society through an evolving system. For more information, visit www.lynwood.k12.ca.us.

Follow us on Twitter [@LynwoodSchools](https://twitter.com/LynwoodSchools) and Instagram [@Lynwoodunified](https://www.instagram.com/Lynwoodunified), or "like" us on Facebook [@LynwoodUSD](https://www.facebook.com/LynwoodUSD)



Vista and Pathway High School celebrated 148 graduates on June 14, followed by 54 grads from the Lynwood Community Adult School.

Adult School salutatorian Esther Muro shared her inspiring journey which includes traveling from Mexico, raising a family, and even being a cancer survivor.

“We are incredibly proud of our graduates and all they have accomplished during such a tumultuous year,” Superintendent Gudiel R. Crosthwaite said. “Lynwood Unified’s Class of 2021 is unlike any other, and I cannot wait to see the positive impacts they will make on the world.”

Lynwood Unified’s staff worked for months to ensure in-person ceremonies would be held. Lynwood and Firebaugh high schools split their ceremonies into two to ensure more families could attend. Each ceremony was also livestreamed.

Face masks did not hide the smiles of seniors and families when the turning of the tassels officially marked the conclusion of the 2020-21 school year.

“After the challenges our community faced over the past year, this was a special week that allowed us to reflect on hardships and embrace our achievements despite them,” LUSD Board President Maria Lopez said. “Lynwood is a community of strength. We always persevere, no matter the obstacle in front of us.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

LUSD_2021GRADS_1: Lynwood High School celebrated 360 graduates on June 16 during two ceremonies at Lynwood Unified’s District field.

LUSD_2021GRADS_2: The family of Firebaugh student Edgar Limas gathers with District Board members and leaders during the school’s graduation ceremony on June 15. Edgar died from cancer and his family received his diploma on his behalf.

###

The mission of **Lynwood Unified School District**, the cultivator of innovative thinkers, is to ensure each student fearlessly achieves his or her highest academic and personal aspirations while contributing to the greater society through a unique system distinguished by:

- ★ People of great character who inspire and lead by example
- ★ The instilling of courage to be creative
- ★ The transformative uses of technology
- ★ Safe and clean environments
- ★ The honoring of all voices of our community