



## NEWS RELEASE

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**CONTACT:** Lauren Creiman

(909) 833-9853

## Fontana Adult School Graduates Share Success Stories during Emotional Commencement Ceremony

**FONTANA, CA**—Alexis Amigon spent two anxious weeks in the hospital fighting COVID-19. Ana Garcia lost her job during the pandemic, after working for 20 years as a waitress. Seryna Thai had just graduated from USC film school when she became afflicted with fibromyalgia. All three women were determined to change the trajectory of their lives by enrolling at Fontana Adult School (FAS).

Today, Amigon is considering a career as a certified respiratory therapist, Garcia has been hired as a bilingual educator for Riverside Unified School District, and Thai is looking forward to teaching digital media at FAS. Amigon and Garcia shared their stories during an emotional Fontana Adult School commencement ceremony, held June 10 at San Manuel Stadium.

“All of our students have amazing stories, and we are so proud of what each and every one of them has accomplished,” FAS Assistant Principal Ruzanna Hernandez said. “So many people don’t realize that if it wasn’t for these programs, many of our students, especially women, would have no path to success in their futures. They are the reasons we are here at Fontana Adult School.”

At 18 years old, Amigon, whose mother is a drug addict, dropped out of high school to take care of her younger brothers. Soon, Amigon was married with two children of her own and took a job as a medical assistant. Amigon needed just one more class to receive her diploma, but kept putting it off until COVID-19 hit, enrolling in class while still in her hospital bed.

“It was the most painful and scary thing I have ever experienced. I genuinely thought I was going to die,” Amigon said. “Not all things in life are easy but when you work hard and put your mind to it, you can do anything. I told myself, you can do this, you can finish. I was able to tell my beautiful siblings and children not only did I beat COVID, I graduated high school. If I could beat the odds, they can too.”

Amigon, who worked at COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites after she recovered, wants to continue working in the healthcare field.

Garcia was 15 years old when she had her first child and took a job as a waitress. Garcia, who is bilingual, enjoyed her work and over the years became the go-to person when coworkers needed help translating a customer request. When enrolling at FAS, Garcia was encouraged to take the interpreter-translator pathway.

Garcia continued to work during the day and take classes at night; after losing her job during the pandemic, she became a full-time student, learning to type and use a computer. Garcia volunteered to help other FAS students receive their GED and began helping FAS teachers translate documents. After receiving her diploma, Garcia was hired as a bilingual educator in Riverside.

“Going to Fontana Adult School is the best investment I ever made,” Garcia said. “Thank you to my teachers and staff for their support, care and patience and making us, the students, feel like we are at home. If I can do it, you can do it too. It’s never too late. Don’t get discouraged. We all have difficult times, but please don’t give up. Congratulations, Class of 2021. We did it!”

After completing several years at film school, Thai was looking forward to a career as a filmmaker when she was stricken with fibromyalgia, a debilitating illness that went undiagnosed for five years and restricted Thai to her bed. The medication Thai received to ease the pain made her lethargic. Needing to engage her brain, Thai enrolled at FAS.

Thai, who hosts her own YouTube channel, “Sharing with Seryna,” quickly made an impression on FAS teachers and staff with her digital skills. Thai helped the school update their computers and upgrade their digital media resources. Thai proved so valuable in helping students overcome technological barriers that FAS hired her as a Digital Media teacher.

“I love teaching adults. They have so much passion for learning,” Thai said. “This is such an incredible opportunity for me. Although I still suffer from fibromyalgia, I am managing better. I have found at FAS a community of people who can tap their artistic skills to provide a better life for themselves and their families. I love to share with them my knowledge and motivate them.”

FAS has 12 educational pathways, from English as a Second Language to culinary arts, and serves as a paraprofessional testing site for the District and City of Fontana. FAS is also an official Pearson VUE test center, and provides High School Equivalency (HSE) and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) testing.

FAS also offers dual enrollment with Chaffey College. In the last year, 21 FAS students completed courses at Chaffey, which assists them in their pursuit of both a high school diploma and an Associate of Arts degree. In January 2022, FAS will partner with Chaffey College to provide CNA training.

“What FAS provides goes beyond the programs,” FAS Principal Cynthia Gleason said. “It’s the services and personalization that our entire staff provides that allows us to see lives transformed as students get a bigger version of what life can be for them and their families. We are here to provide programs and services that are of value and interest to our adult learning community.”

#### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**FUSD FAS1:** Alexis Amigon enrolled at Fontana Adult School while still in her hospital bed, fighting COVID-19, to complete the one class needed to earn her diploma. Amigon is looking toward a career as a respiratory therapist.

**FUSD FAS2:** After losing her job during the pandemic, Ana Garcia enrolled at Fontana Adult School, earning her diploma and completing the interpreter/translator pathway. Garcia was hired by Riverside Unified School District as a bilingual educator.

**FUSD FAS3:** Seryna Thai enrolled at Fontana Adult School as a way to engage her brain after years of being confined to her bed after being stricken with fibromyalgia. The USC film school grad proved so valuable in helping students overcome technological barriers that she was hired as the adult school’s Digital Media teacher.