



Whittier Union HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 13, 2022 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-445-1001

Whittier Union High School Senior Receives Award of Merit for Determination, Resiliency

WHITTIER – As a foster child, California High School senior Sarah Plascencia has become accustomed to change, never knowing when she will have to relocate to a new house or attend a new school. When Plascencia arrived in Whittier, however, she knew that she wanted to stay close to the community and has taken extraordinary steps to maintain the friendships she has made as a Cal High student.

Even after her longtime foster mother died last December and she moved to South Gate, Plascencia successfully advocated for herself to continue at Cal High, even though the commute can take up to an hour each way. For Plascencia, it is a small price to pay for the chance to stay with a school family that has guided and nurtured her.

To honor Plascencia's determination to complete her schooling and graduate with the Cal High Class of 2023, the Whittier Union Board of Trustees recognized Plascencia with an Award of Merit during its Oct. 11 Board meeting.

"Thank you to everyone who is supporting me here today and to the Board of Trustees for this recognition," Plascencia said. "This is my first time being recognized and I would not have gone this far without the support of everyone. I am looking forward to what the future has in store for me after graduation."

After arriving in Whittier as an eighth grader at East Whittier Middle School, Plascencia entered the most stable period of her life, even as the COVID-19 pandemic forced school closures and many months of distance learning. Plascencia, who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) plan, quickly learned to navigate the challenges presented to her at school and succeed.

Plascencia enrolled in Cal High's Health Academy pathway in her sophomore year, motivated by her interest in pursuing a career as a heart surgeon. Plascencia, who immediately connected with her teachers and became close to her Academy classmates, said that the strong bonds created in the Academy had a profound effect on her.

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“I have found Sarah to be one of the most kind and resilient students that I have ever met,” California High School Counselor Aubree Garduno said. “She has learned to advocate for herself and to ask for the things she needs to be a successful student. Her dedication to Cal High and determination to stay here, despite the challenges, is inspirational.”

Plascencia is on track to graduate with her A-G requirements and a Health Academy completion certificate. Although her interest in pursuing a career in the medical profession has waned, Plascencia is looking forward to attending Río Hondo College and finding the academic path that is right for her. Plascencia has grown to love art and drawing and said she would like to be in a field where she can develop creatively.

“In her 17 years, Sarah has faced more challenges than any student should have to confront,” California High School Principal Bill Schloss said. “She has done so with great determination, a solid focus on taking care of business and a positive attitude that helps her keep moving forward. She is bound to find great success in the future because she knows the value of hard work and perseverance.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

WUHS_D_AWARD1: California High School senior Sarah Plascencia received an Award of Merit by the Whittier Union Board of Trustees during a meeting on Oct. 11, where she was recognized for her determination and resiliency.

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OUR MISSION:

The Whittier Union High School District provides all students with an engaging, quality standards-based instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement. Whittier Union High School District works to achieve and maintain excellence in providing a comprehensive education for all students.

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