



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 23, 2017

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Whittier Union Senior Uses Adversity as a Bridge to Future Career in Medicine

WHITTIER – When Pioneer High School senior Alyssa Cayetano’s father was diagnosed with cancer during her sophomore year, the former middle school valedictorian and math enthusiast struggled to find a balance between her studies and support for her father, who passed away last year.

Cayetano’s resolve in the wake of personal loss has helped shape her dreams for the future, looking toward a career as a pharmaceutical chemist developing treatments aimed at curing cancer.

“Alyssa is a phenomenal young lady filled with so much love and compassion for her fellow students and above all her family,” Pioneer High School Principal Lilia Bozigian said. “Her ability to balance both personal life and academic life successfully has proven her resilience and dedication.”

For her motivation to excel academically and be a role model to her peers, Cayetano, who will study chemistry at UC San Diego, was presented with an Award of Merit by the Whittier Union Board of Trustees on Oct. 10.

“From the teachers who teach me, to the coaches who instruct me, I want you all to know that I’m going to make you and Whittier Union proud of who I become in the future,” Cayetano said during her acceptance. “That’s a guarantee.”

Cayetano discovered a passion for mathematics in middle school and has since immersed herself in academic studies and volunteer outreach, taking nearly 20 challenging Advanced Placement and honors courses at Pioneer and earning a 4.4 GPA. This year alone, Cayetano is tackling AP English literature, Calculus BC, AP Chemistry and AP Government.

The student-athlete serves as president of the school’s California Scholarship Federation club, is a four-year member of the tennis team, and participates in the French and writing clubs. She also tutors students participating in the Jaime Escalante Summer Math Academy and serves as an academic mentor for AP students taking calculus and world history.

Cayetano finds inspiration from strong female role models in her life, including academic counselor Araceli Del Valle, her former French teacher Maria DoCarmo and chemistry teacher Julia Bermudez. But it is Cayetano’s mother, Pioneer High class of 1993 graduate Roxann Vitela, who has been her No. 1 supporter, teaching her to embrace perseverance, strength and diligence during life’s most difficult challenges.

“Managing her academics and school activities while supporting her father’s struggle was taxing both physical and emotionally for Alyssa, but she continued to work hard, help others and stay focused on her goal of attending a four-year university,” Bozigian said. “Alyssa is a true example of Titan Pride and what we want all students to embody.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

102317_WUHSD_CAYETANO: Pioneer High School senior Alyssa Cayetano was honored with an Award of Merit from the Whittier Union High School District Board of Trustees for overcoming adversity at home to succeed at school, with goals to become a pharmaceutical chemist and develop cancer treatments.

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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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