



HACIENDA LA PUENTE

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Hacienda La Puente Unified Student-Athlete Wins Hispanic and Latino Excellence in Youth Football Scholarship

CITY OF INDUSTRY – Over the last four years, La Puente High School student-athlete Josiah Hernandez has emerged as a leader, scholar and advocate for his school and District community, participating in various extracurricular activities, clubs and sports, earning him the Hispanic & Latino Excellence in Youth Football Award by the National Football League (NFL).

Hernandez was recognized for his exceptional football abilities, academic achievements and dedication to civics. During the selection process, each of the 32 teams in the league selected one male and one female student to be recognized during game day on Oct. 15. The Los Angeles Rams selected Hernandez, leading to his inclusion as one of eight finalists in California eligible to receive a college scholarship.

The awards are part of the NFL's [Por La Cultura](#), an annual initiative featuring a variety of cultural and community-driven activities in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, and partnership with the Hispanic Heritage Foundation (HHF). The awards and scholarships are designed to recognize Latino high school seniors who excel in the classroom and community.

"When I heard about this opportunity, I knew I had to nominate Josiah," La Puente High head coach Laron Johnson said. "He is an outstanding athlete because of his skill, determination and heart but also his ability to connect, empathize and truly lead by example. He cares about his school, church, friends, family and making a difference in the world. It was such a joy being able to accompany Josiah at the Rams game and I know he has a very bright future ahead of him."

To be selected, Johnson sent in an in-depth application, including photos of Hernandez on and off the field, MaxPreps stats, school transcripts and contributions in school and community engagement. The application included a long list of achievements, including Hernandez being named a National Advanced Placement Scholar, a Tulane University Posse Scholarship semi-finalist and participant in the Kaiser Permanente Work Certificate Program and Summer Youth Internship, where he worked more than 24 hours a week, assisting in the Critical Care Unit of the hospital.

His submission highlighted leadership roles in the Associated Student Body, Health Occupations Students of America, and as a four-year football captain. Additionally, he served as the California Scholarship Federation co-president, Student Board Representative, and participated in the Youth Legislative Program.

MORE

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"I'm a huge NFL fan, so winning this nomination and having the chance to be on the Rams field, seeing how big it is and just soaking in the atmosphere was such a surreal experience and I feel so blessed," Hernandez said. "I want to thank my coaches, counselors and family for their constant support and of course, I want to thank God. I also want to remind my peers and younger students within our District to take advantage of all the amazing opportunities that HLPUSD offers us. Even if you don't know if you can do it, trust me, with the amount of support that is offered here, anything is possible."

During the game, Hernandez and female nominee Maria Murilla received a special on-field moment where they shook hands with professional football players and coaches and received a standing ovation from the audience.

The NFL and the HHF will host a ceremony for Hernandez and the other seven finalists where they will receive their scholarships during Pro Bowl or Super Bowl week in Feb.2024.

"Congratulations, Josiah on this well-deserved and outstanding accomplishment," Superintendent Dr. Alfonso Jiménez said. "At HLPUSD, we are proud to offer robust programs, athletics, extracurricular activities and community partnerships that support our students academic and personal aspirations. Josiah, we can't wait to see what the future holds for you."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

HLPUSD_NFL1: Senior Josiah Hernandez cheers alongside the LA Rams mascot during the Hispanic & Latino Excellence in Youth Football Award nominee NFL game on Oct. 15.

HLPUSD_NFL2: Josiah Hernandez prepares to be sworn-in as La Puente High School student Board representative during a meeting on Sept. 14.

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