



Press Release

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Whittier High Alumni Return to Inspire College, Career Aspirations Among Students

WHITTIER – Whittier High School recently held its second annual Alumni Career Fair, connecting Cardinal graduates – now skilled and seasoned engineers, nurses, educators and police officers – with hundreds of students who are exploring college and career pathways.

More than 200 juniors and seniors and their parents flooded Whittier High’s William C. Gordon Library and its classrooms on Nov. 7 to hear professionals speak about their journeys to achieve success and answer questions from curious students.

“There are so many careers out there that were never available to me, and you have the opportunity to now explore the diversity fields,” said keynote speaker and former principal Lori Eshilian, class of 1972. “You are in control of the excitement, energy and passion to the career you choose to pursue every day.”

Eshilian – who encouraged students to take calculated risks, be determined and pursue a career that sparks inspiration – was one of 16 alumni to participate in the event, organized by the school’s Guidance and New Horizons offices, and supported by the Whittier High Cardinal Computer Academy.

Also taking part were class of 2004 graduate and student-athlete Stephanie Limon, a business administrator with NASA and JPL; real estate agent Robert Colangeli, a basketball player who graduated in 2002; Camille Kanegiser, who graduated in 2011 and founded an animation and digital art company; and Dr. Kelly Holtom, a marriage and family therapist who graduated in 1986.

“How often do students have the opportunity to meet individuals who have been in their shoes, walked the halls they walk, become successful and come back to their school and share their stories?” asked Richard Rodriguez, Whittier High’s assistant principal of guidance. “Through this event, they are exposed to a variety of career pathways and the opportunities are available to them as they begin their own journeys.”

Whittier Police Officer Hugo Figueroa, class of 1999, encouraged students to begin career exploration while in high school. Figueroa said he initially had no interest in law enforcement, but joining the Police Explorers program while in high school sparked his passion for helping others.

“It’s rewarding when you look back at all of the people you’ve helped over the years,” said Figueroa, who was in the school’s Puente program, an initiative that promotes increasing college-going rates.

Cecelia Palomares, a 2006 graduate who was in band and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), first earned a bachelor's degree in education before becoming a sign language interpreter. Palomares described the benefits of taking on lucrative professions.

In planning the event, Whittier High administrators selected alumni representing a variety of fields, enabling students to explore the career technical education (CTE) courses offered at the school. They include culinary arts, business and information technology, computer science, engineering, video game design, graphic design, automotive and medical careers.

The school also provides a host of resources to help students, including offering easy counselor access through "Walk-in Wednesdays" and "Table Tuesdays," self and career exploration workshops, and annual college and career presentations and workshops facilitated by counselors and the Horizons staff.

"We're excited that this program has taken off and provided our students with direct access to former Cardinals who have gone through the trials and tribulations of high school and postsecondary education," Whittier High School Principal Timothy Liggett said. "It's never too early to start thinking about college and career opportunities, and we thank these alumni for being role models to our students."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

112217_WUHSD_WHSALUMNI1: Former Whittier High School principal Lori Eshlian, class of 1972, delivers a keynote message encouraging students to find a career they are passionate about at the school's second annual Alumni Career Fair on Nov. 7.

112217_WUHSD_WHSALUMNI2: More than 200 juniors and seniors and their parents flooded Whittier High's William C. Gordon Library and its classrooms to hear professionals speak about their journeys to achieve success during the school's second annual Alumni Career Fair on Nov. 7.

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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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