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El Monte Union Brings Hispanic Heritage to Life with School Yard Rap Showcase

EL MONTE – El Monte Union High School District (EMUHSD) celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with a series of interactive assemblies and performances spotlighting Latino history and culture in engaging, educational formats designed to resonate with students and families, culminating in a “Soy Asombroso (I Am Awesome)” showcase at El Monte High School on Oct. 10.

The District partnered with School Yard Rap, an innovative group that blends hip-hop with history lessons, for a final showcase during Hispanic Heritage Month, which ran from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15. Additionally, students participated in festive assemblies celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month the week of Sept. 16.

School Yard Rap’s performances uniquely blend hip-hop with important lessons on the contributions of Hispanic Americans and Indigenous peoples. By incorporating elements of science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM), as well as civics and history, the group connects with students on multiple levels, aiming to make learning fun and meaningful.

“I’m grateful for the opportunity to learn more about the Hispanic culture around me,” South El Monte High School junior Ashley Yu said. “Celebrating differences helps us connect on a deeper level, and events like these open our minds, allow us to appreciate diversity, and break down prejudices.”

Throughout the assemblies, School Yard Rap highlighted the achievements of ancient civilizations like the Maya, Inca, and Aztec, while illustrating how indigenous cultures and European colonization shaped Latin American identities. Presentations entitled “Found First Primero” and “Latina History Mujeres” honored the contributions of Indigenous peoples and women in shaping history, while key lessons explored pivotal moments, such as the fight for independence, globalization, and migration.

“Hispanic Heritage Month is about taking pride in being Latino and sharing our culture,” said School Yard Rap artist Jose Manuel Casas Jr. “Partnering with El Monte Union gives us the chance to provide students with a memorable experience, helping them feel seen and represented.”

Adding to the festivities, students, staff, and families joined in to show off their salsa and merengue dance moves. The performances also featured captivating Aztec and folklórico dancers, while the “Soy Asombroso” anthem inspired students to embrace their heritage.

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"The School Yard Rap assembly made learning fun," Mountain View High School junior Heidi Scanlan said. "The songs stuck with me, and seeing my teachers immerse themselves in the experience showed how important it is to embrace different cultures. It's a reminder that learning can happen in creative ways, and it's never too late to broaden your perspective."

School Yard Rap has gained recognition for its innovative approach to education, using music and storytelling to make history and cultural awareness accessible and engaging for students of all ages.

"Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to honor the contributions of Hispanic and Indigenous communities throughout history," EMUHSD Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. "We're thrilled to bring School Yard Rap's vibrant performances to our schools, offering a creative and engaging way for students to explore Latino history."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

EMUHSD SYR 1: El Monte Union students, community members, and Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga dance the "El Caballo Dorado" on stage with School Yard Rap founder Brandon "Griot B" Brown and his team during the "Soy Asombroso (I Am Awesome)" showcase at El Monte High School on Oct. 10. School Yard Rap's performance blends hip-hop with lessons on the contributions of Hispanic Americans and Indigenous peoples.

EMUHSD SYR 2: School Yard Rap representatives perform a lesson on "Latina History Mujeres," honoring Selena Quintanilla-Perez and highlighting the contributions of women in shaping history, during the "Soy Asombroso (I Am Awesome)" showcase at El Monte High School on Oct. 10.

EMUHSD SYR 3: El Monte Union students, community leaders, local dignitaries, and District administrators enjoy the energetic closing performance by the School Yard Rap team during the "Soy Asombroso (I Am Awesome)" showcase at El Monte High School on Oct. 10.

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The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.