



# Fontana Unified School District

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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Fontana Unified's MCJROTC Program Secures Prestigious Marine Corps Honor Unit Distinction

**FONTANA, CA** – For more than 30 years, Fontana High School (FOHI) students have been developing critical skills through the school's Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (MCJROTC), which has been honored by the Marine Corps Reserve Association (MCRA) for its continued excellence in training young students to become role models and community leaders.

The Fontana High MCJROTC program has been named the MCRA Region 4 Honor Unit for 2023-24, marking the program's fourth time earning the distinction (1997, 1999, 2022, 2024), including twice in the last three years. It is the Marine Corps' highest unit award and recognizes FOHI as the Top Naval Honors School in Region 4, which spans the West Coast.

"This speaks to the incredible commitment of our students, staff, and community," said FOHI MCJROTC Senior Marine Instructor (SMI), Lieutenant Colonel Rugsithi Denny Meelarp, Ret. "It's an affirmation of our approach, reflecting our aim to show that our cadets are not only future military leaders but also highly skilled and academically accomplished individuals."

MCJROTC programs that are found to be in the top 20% nationwide earn a Naval Honors School (NHS) designation. The top unit in each of the four regions earns the MCRA Honor Unit designation, which is determined from the compilation of quantitative data submitted by the school as well as some subjective observations from the region director, according to U.S. Marine Corps Director of Communication Strategy and Operations Major Hector Infante.

FOHI separated itself from the rest of the pack in Region 4 for its community service, scholastic achievements of the cadets, and active role of the unit in numerous school activities, according to the award designation letter the school and District received.

Fontana High's MCJROTC program aims to strengthen students' character, self-discipline habits, and provide leadership experience while also engaging students in activities such as academics, marksmanship, raider, color guard, drill team, community service, and more.

LtCol Meelarp has helped lead the program since 2019 and has emphasized the importance of academic excellence to students and focused on helping them unlock scholarship opportunities through MCJROTC programming. In the 2023-24 school year alone, FOHI seniors Alma Negrete, Juliet Lopez, and Katherine Hernandez each earned prestigious MCROTC scholarships worth \$180,000.

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LtCol Meelarp said that those scholarships highlighted the program's success in preparing students not only for military careers but also for higher education and other professional pathways. He added that those awards helped the program not only secure its fourth Honor Unit distinction but also spark further interest in the program among students on campus.

"Fontana High School's MCJROTC program continues to set an extraordinary standard for excellence and leadership," Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. "Being recognized as an Honor Unit speaks volumes about the dedication of our cadets and the unwavering support of their instructors, staff, and community. This achievement is a source of pride for our entire district and reflects the core values we strive to instill in all our students."

#### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**FUSD\_ROT1:** Fontana High School's Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps has been named the Marine Corps Reserve Association's 2023-24 Region 4 Honor Unit, distinguishing it as the top Naval Honors School on the West Coast. It is the program's fourth time earning the award, including twice in the last three years.

**FUSD\_ROT2:** For more than 30 years, Fontana High School has offered a Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps program. The program was named the Marine Corps Reserve Association's Region 4 Honor Unit in 2023-24 for its community service, scholastic achievements of the cadets, and active role of the unit in numerous school activities.

**FUSD\_ROT3:** From left: Fontana High Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (MCJROTC) graduates Katherine Hernandez, Alma Negrete, and Juliet Lopez celebrate earned ROTC Scholarships during the 2023-24 school year. The FOHI MCJROTC program earned the Marine Corps Reserve Association's Region 4 Honor Unit in 2023-24 in part for the scholastic achievements of its cadets.

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