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NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Theatre Programs Shine, Earn Top Honors at Prestigious CETA High School Festival

FONTANA, CA – Three Fontana Unified School District (FUSD) high school theatre programs have once again been recognized with numerous top awards and accolades for stellar performances and craftsmanship at the 2024-25 California Educational Theatre Association (CETA) High School Festival.

Fontana High School's Theatre Production program, Henry J. Kaiser High's Artistic and Theatrical Society (KATS), and Jurupa Hills High School's Players of the Palace all wowed judges and earned top accolades at the CETA High School Festival of Scenes, which was held from Jan. 17 to 19 at Fullerton Union High School and featured performances from 17 schools.

Performing scenes from their fall 2024 theatrical productions, all three FUSD schools placed in the top four of CETA's Area 2, where first to fourth place was separated by just 0.12 of a point, while the entire cast and crew received certificates of merit at the prestigious event. All three productions placed in the top 10 of the 75 eligible schools in Southern California, with Jurupa Hills and Kaiser tying for third place and Fontana High taking fourth in Area 2.

Eight Fontana Unified students won Adjudicator Awards, which are considered the CETA Festival's top honor, with at least one student from each high school recognized. All three FUSD schools cheered each other on throughout the fall production season and CETA Festival, referring to each other as "cousins" in the Fontana Unified theatre family.

"It's just a family we have within the theatre community and I love how it exists here," Fontana High theatre director Erin McKeivitt said. "I have the best job in the world, I am so blessed to be doing what I get to do with the amazing humans I get to do it with."

Jurupa Hills won an Ensemble Award for the program's production of "It's a Wonderful Life." Individually, seniors Alvin Gomez, Amy Griffin, and Axl Tercero won Adjudicator Awards, which Griffin has earned three years in a row. Senior Nicholes Coleman and junior Matthew Lopez also received Director's Awards.

"We are incredibly proud of our students for upholding the level of excellence that the Jurupa Hills Theatre program is known for," said Jurupa Hills theatre director James Griffin, whose program has placed first at the CETA Festival three times. "Their dedication, creativity, and passion continue to impress, year after year."

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Fresh off a first-place finish in 2023-24, the Kaiser KATS walked away with top honors at the CETA Festival, this time for its production of "The Crucible." Senior Matthew Davis received an Adjudicator Award, while seniors Michaela Carrillo and Nicole Paez secured Director's Awards.

"Giving students an opportunity to explore deep topics of historical context is very powerful, to see them overcome challenges and learn while doing so is incredible," Kaiser High theatre director Wendi Johnson said. "'The Crucible' was our 2020 production and was shut down before we opened. It was incredible to be able to bring it back to Kaiser and have the original cast in the audience to see it."

Fontana High's performance of "She Kills Monsters" led to second-place recognition in the Festival's Second Stage Competition and the program's third Artistic Merit award. Four students received Adjudicator Awards: Belen Cruz Flores, Hayley Shelly King, Cielo Tule, and Susanna Medina, while Lillian Flanagan and Brandon Nunez came away with Director's Awards.

"Half the kids in our play this year had never been on stage in a show before," said McKeivitt, who has led Fontana High to a CETA win in 2019 and three Artistic Merit awards since 2018. "They worked so hard and I feel so much pride after seeing them inspired and rejuvenated through this CETA Festival experience, on top of winning all these awards."

All three theatre departments now turn their attention to their spring productions. Jurupa Hills will stage "Frozen: The Musical," with shows on March 7-8 and March 13-15; Kaiser High will stage "Chicago" on April 24-26 and May 1; and Fontana High will put on "Beetlejuice Jr." on April 10-12.

"Fontana Unified is home to an extraordinary amount of artistic talent, as demonstrated by the remarkable achievements of our theatre programs at the CETA Festival," Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. "The dedication, creativity, and passion of our students and educators are truly inspiring, and I encourage our community to support these incredible productions and witness firsthand the brilliance within our District."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_CETA1: Jurupa Hills High School's Players of the Palace theatre program tied for third place in Area 2, won an Ensemble Award, and five students earned individual awards for its production of "It's a Wonderful Life" at the prestigious 2024-25 California Educational Theatre Association (CETA) High School Festival.

FUSD_CETA2: From left to right: Henry J. Kaiser High School Theatre students Nicole Paez, Matthew Davis, and Rose Carrillo celebrate after their award-winning performance of "The Crucible" at the 2024-25 California Educational Theatre Association (CETA) High School Festival.

FUSD_CETA3: Fontana High School's Theatre program took second place in the California Educational Theatre Association (CETA) High School Festival's Second Stage competition for its production of "She Kills Monsters." The entire cast and crew earned certificates of merit, while six students earned Adjudicator or Director's awards.

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