



WHITTIER UNION

HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 3, 2025 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

Whittier Union Alumna, Computer Science Advocate, Finds Success with Tech Innovations

WHITTIER – When La Serna High School Class of 2017 alumna Markie Wagner was in middle school, she was already coding and developing her own apps. After reading former Apple CEO Steve Jobs’ biography, Wagner’s desire for working in tech grew by leaps and bounds. When she arrived at La Serna, Wagner said she found the school’s science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) instruction lacking, and was determined to make meaningful changes to the curriculum.

Today, Wagner is celebrated as the leading advocate and architect of La Serna’s award-winning computer science program, while continuing to advance her own career as a tech titan, artificial intelligence (AI) researcher, software engineer, Thiel Fellow, and founder and CEO of Forge.

“The world needs more technologists working on solving humanity’s most important problems,” Wagner said. “Today, the students from La Serna are sending rockets to space, using AI to do impossible things. To everyone who believed in this program - thank you for believing that La Serna students can and will build the future.”

Wagner grew up as a computer prodigy and started building viral apps and websites in elementary school. Once at La Serna High, Wagner discovered that many bright, talented students were dropping out of their STEM majors just a year into college.

Determined to make a change, Wagner asked then-La Serna principal and current Assistant Superintendent of Personnel Services Ann Fitzgerald to sponsor the addition of engineering, coding, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses to the curriculum, and convinced geometry teacher Laura Glass and AP Physics teacher Todd Boschman to spend a summer doing professional development so they could teach the new classes. She drafted curriculum and started the first engineering club, advocating for students across campus to start writing code.

“I was in everyone’s ear until we got a yes,” Wagner said. “No matter how much you want to be an engineer, if there are no classes for it and you get to university and you fall behind, it’s scary. Students need to see themselves as builders before they reach university.”

Wagner’s advocacy across campus brought many new students into the STEM program and inspired many women to pursue new classes like Computer Science Essentials, AP Computer Science Principles, Intro to Product Design, and Principles of Engineering, classes that began when Wagner was still a La Serna senior. The College Board has since recognized La Serna with its AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award twice, in 2019 and 2022.

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"As a result of Markie advocating to have STEM classes, especially for our low-income and underrepresented students, we have been able to provide these classes for hundreds of students," Glass said. "We've had students who have gone to work at Google and Microsoft. One student who attended Berkeley is now in Washington D.C. working as a cybersecurity expert. I cannot express how much of an impact Markie has made on our school."

Wagner has had a whirlwind journey since graduating from La Serna. After attending both USC and Stanford, Wagner worked as an engineer for Google and Waymo before founding Delphi Labs, a cutting-edge research and advisory firm with a focus on applied AI. Currently, Wagner serves as a Thiel Foundation fellow and CEO of Forge, a Bay-area AI startup backed by Founders Fund and OpenAI.

Not content with merely building the future, Wagner said she is committed to guiding the tech community into an era of "good quests," asking the world's greatest minds to focus on solutions for the critical and existential challenges facing humanity today.

"I would encourage everyone to be thoughtful about what they choose to spend their lives on," Wagner said. "Each person comes into the world with different things they care about. No matter who you are, there is a way to channel your unique ability into doing great work. You can spend your days doing work that matters, that changes people's lives for the better and takes us into a tomorrow that looks better than today."

PHOTO CAPTION:

WUHSD_MARKIEWAGNER: La Serna High School Class of 2017 alumna Markie Wagner is known across campus for being the leading advocate and architect of La Serna's award-winning computer science program.

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