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## **Bonita Unified Students Receive College-Level Internships Through Regional Center Program**

**SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE** – Bonita Unified high school students looking toward careers in the healthcare industry have received invaluable experience as interns, thanks to an exclusive partnership with the San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center (SG/PRC), which provided the students access to college-level no-cost training in the psychology, nursing, and social work fields.

Six Bonita Unified students took advantage of the career technical education (CTE) learning opportunity, which concluded in mid-May. The inaugural SG/PRC interns are: San Dimas High seniors Jazmine Cardenas (social work) and Marlie Walker (social work), San Dimas High junior Kamryn Henderson (psychology), and Bonita High juniors Morgan Salcido (psychology), Ranin Sour (nursing), and Katherine Situ (nursing).

"Internships like these empower our students to build confidence, develop workplace skills, and create valuable connections that can shape their career journeys," Bonita Unified CTE coordinator Vanessa Tilford said.

The internships gave students insight into the services provided by the SG/PRC, which serves 30 cities in the Foothill, Pomona, and El Monte health districts. With 21 nonprofit centers serving California, the Regional Center's mission is to advocate and support individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, working with all age groups to support those living with intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism.

As psychology interns, Salcido, Henderson, and Abarca-Galo participated in intake meetings, the first step for families seeking a referral for Regional Center services. They learned how to engage with a potential client, what questions to ask, and how to navigate a private, personal conversation.

Salcido said she has sat in on sessions that were touching and illuminating, but has also observed real-life scenarios that tug at her heart.

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Hearing these stories makes Salcido even more determined to enter the psychology field, she said, and she hopes to return for another year of internship, with an eye on the social work program.

“Psychologists help people of all ages with medical issues that they are unable to resolve on their own. I want to be that person,” Salcido said. “After I’ve finished my schooling and enter the profession, I would love to come back to work for the Regional Center.”

As social work interns, Walker and Cardenas planned and promoted the Regional Center’s annual Adult Spring Dance, one of the biggest nights of the year for SG/PRC clients, held on April 4. Looking to create a Hollywood-style vibe for the dance, the pair decided on the theme “Lights, Camera, Action” and designed a flyer that invited attendees to bring their best dance moves. After the date was announced and the flyer was distributed, more than 200 individuals had registered within 24 hours of opening registration.

“I chose social work because I’m interested in the betterment of the community,” Walker said. “An internship makes the career path less daunting. The Regional Center provides us with good base knowledge in social work. I would recommend this program for all students looking into a career in the healthcare industry.”

Additionally, all interns were trained to protect patient health information as designated in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Upon finishing their internships, the students received a certificate of completion that they can put on their college applications and resumes.

“The San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center internship program began in 2015 with Azusa Pacific University students, and this year we decided to expand the program to include high school students,” SG/PRC Director of Services and Equity Salvador Gonzalez said. “These are highly motivated individuals who are dedicating themselves to helping others and I hope our partnership with Bonita Unified continues to grow.”

### PHOTO:

**BUSD\_REGIONALCENTER:** Bonita Unified high school students receive certificates after gaining invaluable experience in psychology, nursing, and social work through internships with the San Gabriel/Pomona Regional Center (SG/PRC).

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