



PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Maria Hernandez

PHONE: (909) 447-2406

Outstanding Seniors Exemplify Excellence Across El Monte Union

EL MONTE – El Monte Union High School District's Class of 2025 features several distinguished seniors who have excelled in academics, leadership, and service, exemplifying the District's mission to empower resilient learners prepared to thrive in college, careers, and beyond.

Through career technical education pathways and college readiness programs such as Advancement Via Individual Determination, Early College Academy, Advanced Placement courses and dual enrollment, El Monte Union students are introduced to fields in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM), gaining access to industry-relevant training, hands-on learning, and the tools they need to succeed in post-secondary education and beyond.

"These remarkable seniors showcase the values and determination that define El Monte Union High School District," Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. "Their accomplishments inside and outside the classroom demonstrate perseverance and excellence. We celebrate their success and the positive example they set for all students in our community."

El Monte High School senior Karen Itzel Solis is a first-generation college student recognized for her leadership, academic success, and commitment to service. She has participated in numerous school and community organizations during her time at El Monte High including National Honor Society, Link Crew, Future Business Leaders of America, Girls Who Code, and the Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Program—serving as vice president, historian, and commissioner of community service across various groups. Solis has completed more than 500 volunteer hours and supported the passage of a local clean-air ordinance through the El Monte Breathe Clean Coalition.

She also took eight dual enrollment college courses, all while maintaining a 3.93 GPA and balancing sports, work, and internships. Solis will attend Georgetown University to study sociology and political science, with plans to become a lawyer and advocate for underrepresented communities. She credits her mentors and experiences in El Monte Union for shaping her path and goals.

Fernando R. Ledesma High School senior John Ho has worked hard to overcome challenges and stay on track for graduation. Born in San Gabriel, Ho moved often during his early years—living in Texas and Arizona before returning to California. Despite the frequent transitions, he remained active in football, wrestling, the Red Cross Foundation Club, and a tutoring program at a nearby elementary school. Ho said that graduating on time, despite challenges in early life, is his proudest accomplishment. Ho currently holds a 3.8 GPA and plans to enlist in the United States (U.S.) Navy after graduation to train as a Damage Controlman, a specialized naval engineer focused on firefighting.

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Arroyo High School senior Jacob Smith has demonstrated a strong commitment to community service and leadership throughout his high school years. A lifelong El Monte resident and Eagle Scout, Smith has completed nearly 2,000 hours of community service, contributing to projects in his city and national parks. In the summer before his senior year, Smith participated in the Boys and Girls State program, which teaches juniors the importance of government and civic engagement. Smith credits his high school experience with helping him grow more outgoing and mature as he embraced new opportunities to succeed. He currently boasts a 3.85 GPA and plans to attend the Naval Academy Preparatory School after graduation, with the goal of becoming a U.S. Navy officer.

South El Monte High School senior Jocelyn Calleja will attend Johns Hopkins University on a full-ride scholarship, where she plans to major in public health and biology with a minor in linguistics. A proud first-generation college student, Calleja co-founded the Operation Smile club and was involved in California Scholarship Federation (CSF) and tennis. With a 4.38 GPA and a strong passion for service, she is committed to becoming a physician focused on equitable healthcare. Inspired by her mentors and shaped by personal growth, Calleja said she looks forward to starting this next chapter in Baltimore and hopes to make a meaningful impact in her community and beyond.

Mountain View High School senior David Du has embraced leadership, academics, and athletics throughout his high school journey, all while maintaining a 4.15 GPA. Born and raised in El Monte, David is a first-generation Vietnamese American and has attended Mountain View since his freshman year. He has been involved in Key Club as spirit leader and secretary, CSF, Link Crew, Academic Decathlon, Pacific Horizon, and choir – performing as a tenor for four years. Du also competed in track and cross country, serving as captain and earning a medal in the 4x100-meter relay at the Mission Valley League finals. He said he plans to study pre-business economics as he prepares to start at UCLA in the fall. David credits his coaches and teachers for helping him grow into a stronger student, athlete, and leader.

Alexis DiPrima, a senior at Rosemead High School and Class of 2025 Valedictorian, is a first-generation Mexican-Italian American leader and advocate. Born in Glendale and raised in Rosemead, DiPrima has held leadership roles as founder and president of the Hispanic Youth Leadership Council and Special Education Inclusion Council. She also serves as vice president of Sisters Achieving Greatness, Art, Truth, Health & Service and has participated in Link Crew, the Associated Student Body, Key Club, CSF, Speech & Debate, and varsity track and cross country. Outside of school, DiPrima founded and is acting CEO of the nonprofit Visionaries Uniting & Empowering Leaders of America, mentors students, and serves on multiple youth advisory councils influencing education policy. She boasts a 4.45 GPA and will attend Stanford University to study political science with plans for a master's and law degree. DiPrima has also earned the Coca-Cola Scholarship, Gates Scholarship, and Gold Hispanic Heritage Foundation Youth Award, and credits her teachers and mentors for shaping her growth.

"I am excited to push my own limits and discover more about the world of leadership and changemaking. Over time, I have gradually become more confident, self-assured, and willing to cause 'good trouble' in the name of ensuring that underrepresented voices do not go unheard," DiPrima said. "Have the audacity. Be bold. Don't be afraid to take up space—even in places that don't seem built for you—because your presence makes an impact."

PHOTO CAPTION:

EMUHSD STANDOUT SENIORS 1: El Monte Union spotlights six Class of 2025 seniors—trailblazers in academics, leadership, and service—who embody the District's mission to empower students to lead and thrive. From left to right: El Monte High School senior Karen Itzel Solis, Fernando R. Ledesma High School senior John Ho, Arroyo High School senior Jacob Smith, South El Monte High School senior Jocelyn Calleja, Mountain View High School senior David Du, and Rosemead High School senior Alexis DiPrima.

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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.