



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sept. 3, 2025 CONTACT: Maria Hernandez PHONE: (909) 447-2406

El Monte Union Recognizes Generations of Impact with School Facility Dedication

EL MONTE – In an emotional tribute to three community leaders whose vision and dedication transformed the lives of generations of students, the El Monte Union High School District (EMUHSD) officially dedicated the newly renovated multi-purpose building and gymnasium at Fernando R. Ledesma High School (FRLHS), renaming it the Freddy and Bernie Arteaga and Frank Ogaz Center on Aug. 27.

The evening ceremony brought together families, staff, alumni, and community members to honor the Arteaga brothers and the late Frank Ogaz for their decades of service to students. The celebration featured heartfelt speeches, special recognitions, a ceremonial unveiling and ribbon-cutting, and a community taco dinner.

"It's not just a new name on the wall, it's the story of three leaders who gave their lives to help students succeed when the odds were against them," EMUHSD Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. "This center stands as a permanent tribute to the power of belief, service, and community."

The renaming of the facility reflects a journey that began decades ago. In 1975, Freddy and Bernie Arteaga arrived in El Monte as young immigrants from Mexico, raised by a single mother of six, who attended the dedication. The brothers immersed themselves in the community, excelling as student-athletes at Arroyo High School and eventually returning as educators and mentors. Freddy has served as a teacher, counselor, and now principal of FRLHS, and Bernie has been a counselor and advocate of students and families for more than 30 years.

"I'm incredibly grateful and privileged to have had the opportunity to serve and be part of the Fernando R. Ledesma school community," Freddy said. "For many years, sad, scared, frustrated, and confused parents would walk through these doors but with sustained consistency, intentionality, care, and hard work, we've transformed that feeling into one of hope. We've ensured our students are never forgotten and that they receive the best experience, support, and state-of-the-art centers and technology possible."

During the event, Dr. Zuniga shared that it was Freddy's birthday and led the community in singing "Happy Birthday" before inviting Bernie to the podium to speak.

"It's an honor to be recognized alongside such impactful mentors and leaders, who I know are smiling down on us, proud of the work we've done and will continue to do," Bernie said. "I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to thank the dedicated staff members who have been with us since the beginning. Their tireless efforts on behalf of our students, this school, and our shared mission have made all the difference."

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A prominent civic leader, former EMUHSD Board President, and devoted supporter of education, the legacy of the late Ogaz was honored by his son, Frank C. Ogaz, who shared remarks on his behalf. Ogaz was instrumental in the founding and development of FRLHS and worked alongside the Arteaga brothers and longtime administrator Fernando R. Ledesma to establish a school rooted in equity and opportunity.

"My dad was a great human being who would have loved this. He dedicated so much of his time here. He cared deeply about his students, his colleagues, and this District," said the younger Frank Ogaz. "My dad was like a lighthouse – steady and unwavering. In the chaos of a storm, you could always look to him as a leader. All great leaders can be seen that way, including Ledesma, Freddy, and Bernie. This school and this District will continue to serve as a lighthouse, guiding students toward the path of success. On behalf of my entire family, thank you for this recognition."

Fernando R. Ledesma High, formerly known as Valle Lindo Continuation School, was renamed in 2005 to honor Ledesma's nearly 40 years of service to the District. As assistant superintendent of adult and alternative education, Ledesma shaped the school's mission and mentored the next generation of leaders, including Freddy, Bernie, and Ogaz.

Under their leadership, alongside former Principal John Morris and Assistant Principal Joel Kyne, the school was transformed into a model of innovation and student-centered success. Fernando R. Ledesma High has since been recognized four times as a California Model Continuation High School, a reflection of its ongoing commitment to redefining continuation schools and supporting student achievement.

"Leadership is more than policies and programs. It's about believing in students and helping them realize what they're capable of," EMUHSD Board President Florencio Briones said. "These outstanding leaders have made sure every student matters, every voice is heard, and every dream has a chance. Their impact is reflected in the lives their students go on to live. I have deep admiration for the foundation they built – a principal leading with vision, a counselor uplifting with compassion, and a trustee shaping policy with purpose. Their commitment reminds us that education is not just a system; it's about people and family. This center will stand as a symbol of that."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

EMUHSD FRLHS DEDICATION 1: Fernando R. Ledesma High School Guidance Counselor Bernie Arteaga (left) and Principal Freddy Arteaga (right) celebrate with Yolanda Ogaz (middle), wife of the late Frank Ogaz, a former El Monte Union Board President, during the dedication of the school's newly renamed Freddy and Bernie Arteaga and Frank Ogaz Center on Aug. 27.

EMUHSD FRLHS DEDICATION 2: El Monte Union Superintendent Edward Zuniga (right) leads the community in singing happy birthday to Fernando R. Ledesma High School Principal Freddy Arteaga (left) during the dedication of the school's newly renamed Freddy and Bernie Arteaga and Frank Ogaz Center on Aug. 27.

EMUHSD FRLHS DEDICATION 3: The Ogaz family celebrates the unveiling and ribbon-cutting of Fernando R. Ledesma High School's newly renamed Freddy and Bernie Arteaga and Frank Ogaz Center during a dedication ceremony on Aug. 27.

EMUHSD FRLHS DEDICATION 4: Fernando R. Ledesma High School Principal Freddy Arteaga (left) and Guidance Counselor Bernie Arteaga (right) receive flowers from their families and smile in front of the newly unveiled sign during the Aug. 27 dedication of the school's newly renamed Freddy and Bernie Arteaga and Frank Ogaz Center.

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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.