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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 21, 2025

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Covina-Valley Unified AVID Coordinator Named National Finalist for AVID Staff Developer of the Year

COVINA, CA – Las Palmas Middle School teacher and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Coordinator Christy Thiel has been named one of only four finalists nationwide for the AVID Staff Developer of the Year Award, which honors educators for outstanding contributions to professional learning, student success, and the advancement of the AVID program.

In 2008, Thiel became the school's first AVID elective teacher and coordinator when the program offered only one section for seventh-graders. Seventeen years later, more than 330 students make up the 10 sections of AVID at Las Palmas, spanning sixth through eighth grade, including three AVID Excel sections for students in need of additional language support.

"I am truly honored to be named a finalist for this award, especially among such an exceptional group of educators who serve as AVID staff developers," Thiel said. "AVID professional development has been foundational in my growth as both a teacher and coordinator over the years, and I love that I now get to give back and support other educators in their professional learning journeys. I am also incredibly grateful for the amazing Las Palmas teachers and administrators who have helped grow our AVID program over the years, and I have the best AVID site team alongside me."

Las Palmas is both a National AVID Demonstration School and an AVID Showcase School, serving as a model of best practices for college and career readiness. Through helping students hone their WICOR - Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading – skills and providing early exposure to college and career pathways, AVID aims to prepare students for long-term success.

Bi-weekly tutorials encourage students to bring questions from their academic classes into the AVID classroom, where they present areas of confusion to their groups. Through Socratic questioning, their peers assist them in working through questions, and college tutors provide additional support.

"Many of our college tutors are former AVID students themselves, and some were even in our AVID program at Las Palmas. They've experienced AVID's impact firsthand as middle and high school students, and now they enjoy working as AVID tutors to help continue that same impact for others," Thiel said. "One of our former AVID students who returned as a college tutor shared that she remembered visiting California Baptist University (CBU) on a field trip with our AVID class. That visit stayed with her, and now she is attending CBU and studying to be a teacher. It really comes full circle."

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Through the AVID program, students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades participate in college field trips to public and private universities, giving them a glimpse into the many opportunities available to them.

AVID also helps students build skills that extend beyond the classroom, including teamwork, respectful communication, self-advocacy, and critical thinking.

As an AVID Staff Developer, Thiel has been facilitating professional development initiatives for AVID for six years. She brings that expertise back to Las Palmas, where she supports teacher and paraprofessional training at the secondary level across the District.

"I value the opportunities to support educators since the impact can be exponential as they take their learning back to their classrooms and school sites," Thiel said. "However, I still love being in the classroom, and my favorite part about teaching is the students. Seeing their energy, excitement, and curiosity, as well as those lightbulb moments where things really click, is incredibly rewarding."

Thiel will attend the AVID National Conference in San Diego this December, where the winner of the AVID Staff Developer of the Year Award will be announced. She will also present a session entitled, "Create a Culture that Drives Student Performance: Leverage Relational Capacity to Build a Culture of Academic Success" alongside Las Palmas principal Dr. Roy Umana.

"Ms. Thiel is a standout leader and teacher in our District, always putting students first and ensuring they have the tools they need to thrive," Interim Superintendent Dr. Jonathan Blackmore said. "Thank you, Ms. Thiel, for everything you do for your students and our District through AVID."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

CVUSD_THIEL1: Christy Thiel, Las Palmas Middle School AVID Coordinator and teacher, is one of only four finalists nationwide for the AVID Staff Developer of the Year Award, recognizing her for outstanding contributions to professional learning, student success, and the advancement of AVID.

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