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PRESS RELEASE

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Upland High School Welcomes Incoming Freshmen Through Highlander Day and Incoming Families Night

UPLAND – Upland Unified School District’s incoming freshmen got a first look at the high school experience during Upland High School’s signature transition events, Highlander Day and Incoming Families Night, which introduce future Highlanders to the school’s vibrant academic, arts, athletic, and extracurricular offerings, helping students and families build excitement and confidence as they prepare for the year ahead.

Highlander Day invites approximately 800 eighth-grade students to Upland High School for an immersive, hands-on introduction to high school life. Students spend the day touring classrooms, exploring Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways, participating in a club fair, meeting student-athletes, connecting with peer leaders, and taking part in a spirited pep rally led by Associated Student Body (ASB), cheer, and performance groups.

“Highlander Day gives students a true sense of what it means to be a Highlander,” event organizer Laura McMullen said. “We want them to walk the campus, talk to our students, see our programs in action, and feel the energy of this community. It is so much more meaningful than simply hearing about what we offer.”

More than 100 student volunteers from Link Crew, ASB, cheer, athletics, and various clubs contributed to bringing the event to life. Their efforts were supported by staff across the campus, including administration, custodial teams, Nutrition Services, program coordinators, athletic directors, and club advisors.

UHS sophomore Anjali Shah remembers attending Highlander Day and now volunteers to help eighth graders during the event.

“This event really cleared up all of my fears, and actually got me excited for my freshman year,” Shah said. “In my experience, the most helpful thing from Highlander Day is being able to ask the leaders questions about high school.”

Katie Marotte, who will transition from the homeschooling experience, attended Highlander Day to get familiar with the campus and the electives offered. “The fun atmosphere made me really excited to

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experience UHS,” Marotte said. “I also really liked seeing things I didn't know about like the auto shop class, because if I hadn't visited, I wouldn't have known I may be interested in something like that.”

Following Highlander Day, Upland High School hosted Incoming Families Night, an event designed to help families see what their students experienced at Highlander Day. The night began with a video highlighting the school's programs and culture, followed by a rotation through four informational stations.

Families learned about Dr. Loren Sanchez U-College Academy, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) offerings, Special Education, and the Counseling Department's four-year planning process. They also explored a program fair featuring academic departments, student activities, and tours of CTE classrooms.

“Incoming Families Night allows parents to explore the campus alongside their students and ask questions that help them feel informed and supported,” Assistant Principal Ana Martin said. “It reassures families that Upland High School has opportunities for every student, regardless of their interests or background.”

These events are part of a larger system of support for incoming freshmen. Upland High School also offers Freshmen Summer Academy, a free three-day program focused on campus orientation, academic refreshers, and community building. All participants receive a complimentary ASB card to encourage early involvement. In addition, Link Crew hosts Freshman Orientation, where upperclassmen mentors guide new students through activities that promote connection and belonging.

“Helping students feel at home from day one is our priority,” Principal Martin Gomez said. “Whether it is through Summer Academy, Orientation, or Highlander Day, we want our newest Highlanders to know that this is a community that cares about them. Upland High School is proud to continue the long-standing tradition of preparing incoming students and families for a successful high school experience.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

UUSD_WelcomingFreshmen1: On Highlander Day, members of Upland High School's environmental club, Roots and Shoots, talk to current eighth graders about their high school experience. The event is an opportunity for students to learn more about school life at UHS.

UUSD_WelcomingFreshmen2: Incoming Families Night at Upland High School welcomed eighth graders and their families to campus for information sessions about the school and the breadth of college and career preparation opportunities available to freshmen students.

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