



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jan. 16, 2026 CONTACT: Maria Hernandez PHONE: (909) 447-2406

## **El Monte Union Students Earn Coveted Spots in 2026 Tournament of Roses Honor Band**

**EL MONTE** – Six El Monte Union High School District students took part in the 2026 Rose Parade on Jan. 1 after being selected to perform with the Pasadena City College Tournament of Roses Honor Band, representing their schools and the District during one of the nation’s most widely watched New Year’s Day events.

South El Monte High School junior Aden Gonzalez returned as a herald performer for the second consecutive year; Mountain View High School (MVHS) senior Pablo Pinedo was selected for percussion (cymbals), and senior Jennifer Rivera-Rivas, along with juniors Samantha De La Cueva Morfin, Daniela Garcia, and Karina Rodriguez, were all selected as color guard performers. The District’s Board of Trustees honored the students during its Jan. 7 meeting, presenting certificates of recognition and celebrating the milestone with family members, school leaders, and music educators.

“These students exemplify what is possible when talent meets dedication and support,” Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. “Their achievement reflects countless hours of preparation, the strength of our Visual and Performing Arts programs, and the commitment of the educators and families who help our students thrive. We are incredibly proud of how they represented El Monte Union on a national stage.”

The Tournament of Roses Honor Band, a nationally recognized ensemble, has been a highlight of the annual Rose Parade in Pasadena for decades. Selected through a highly competitive audition process, the group represents the top high school musicians and performers from across Southern California.

Once selected, students committed to months of rehearsals to build precision, endurance, and showmanship before performing along the 5.5-mile parade route themed “The Magic in Teamwork.”

For Gonzalez, returning to the Rose Parade for a second consecutive year added deeper meaning to the experience.

“I’m grateful for everyone who made this possible and supported me throughout this journey, especially my mom and brother, who made sure I was able to get to every practice, and my principal and our school community for their constant encouragement,” Gonzalez said. “Returning to the Rose Parade for a second year made this even more special and reaffirmed my hard work. I’m also thankful to our assistant band director, Manny, for pushing me to grow as a performer every day.”

Students trained alongside peers from dozens of schools while preparing for one of the nation’s most widely viewed parades. Rehearsals focused on honing the synchronization, stamina, and collaboration required for the performance.

“This was a life-changing opportunity and pushed me outside of my comfort zone in the best way,” De La Cueva Morfin said. “While I’ve been part of color guard throughout high school, this experience was something completely new. From the rehearsals to the connections made, it’s a memory I will always cherish.”

MVHS Band Director James Fraracci also reflected on the significance of the achievement.

“I am incredibly proud of our students and the dedication, character, and heart they bring into everything they do to perfect their craft,” Fraracci said. “As I mark my 15th year with the District, which began with my first assignment at Mountain View, seeing them perform in the Rose Parade is especially meaningful and speaks to the collective support of our coaches, families, alumni, and community.”

For more information and to watch the live performance, [click here](#).

#### **PHOTO CAPTION:**

**EMUHSD HONOR BAND 1:** From left to right: Mountain View High School senior Pablo Pinedo, juniors Karina Rodriguez, Daniela Garcia, and Samantha De La Cueva Morfin, senior Jennifer Rivera-Rivas, and South El Monte High School junior Aden Gonzalez celebrate being recognized by the El Monte Union High School District Board of Trustees during a meeting on Jan. 7.

*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.*