



BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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NEWS RELEASE

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Bonita Unified Sophomore Recognized as Leadership Program's Youth of the Year

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – When Agatha Sosa arrived at Bonita High School as a freshman, she was too nervous to speak publicly. Offered an opportunity to join a five-week leadership program that would boost her confidence and place her on a pathway to success in college and career, Sosa said she doubted that she could learn so much in so short a time.

One year later, Sosa has been recognized as a Kollab Youth 2026 Youth of the Year after joining the organization's Workforce Development Program, where she progressed rapidly, received mentorship from industry experts, and earned a spot on Kollab Youth's Teen Leadership Council.

"Kollab Youth has challenged me and pushed me to think bigger. My goals and dreams are possible if I approach the world with confidence," Sosa said. "Kollab Youth has helped me so much in understanding what it takes to start a successful career. Learning these leadership skills has allowed me to give back and become a mentor myself, which I love. I would recommend this program to anyone."

Kollab Youth works with underserved students, aged 14 to 19, to help them discover and explore career opportunities in business, STEM, and other high-growth, high-wage job markets, employing corporate sponsors such as Wells Fargo, The Walt Disney Company, Alaska Airlines, and ABC7 Los Angeles.

Sosa said she has always been interested in taking leadership roles. When she was in elementary school, Sosa became involved in student council, but said her shyness nearly overwhelmed her and kept her from realizing her potential. In middle school, Sosa eased up on her extracurriculars, but in high school, urged by her mother, Bonita High School chemistry teacher Ruth Vilchez, Sosa began looking for an afterschool program that could grow her communication skills.

Sosa was persuaded by Bonita Unified career technical education coordinator Vanessa Tilford to attend a no-cost Kollab Youth workshop, where she met Kollab Youth Recruitment and Outreach coordinator Lance Holliday. After just one meeting, Sosa said she knew she never wanted to leave the program.

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“Mr. Holliday was so supportive. He told me that the program would help me and that Kollab Youth mentors would be with me every step of the way,” Sosa said. “Before I attended the workshop, I didn’t believe the program would work for me. But they got me to think about my future and how to make every experience count. Over time, I found my voice and got over my shyness. I can’t thank Kollab Youth enough.”

As part of a 60-student cohort, Sosa has participated in Zoom meetings and on-site field trips, including one Zoom meeting highlighting USC’s industrial engineering program, where she spoke with professors about taking animation and artificial intelligence classes. Sosa is interested in studying industrial engineering, preferably at Cal Poly Pomona, looking toward a dream job with Disney.

Sosa, who continued to attend the afterschool workshops, was recognized as a Kollab Youth of the Year for her outreach and enthusiasm in mentoring new members. Sosa also submitted an essay where she discussed her future plans, how she can be successful moving forward, and how she has benefited from the Kollab Youth experience.

“I want to use my success to mentor other students who are starting out with the same nerves and big dreams I had,” Sosa wrote in her essay. “Because of Kollab Youth, I now approach challenges with confidence, viewing them as opportunities to grow and move closer to my goals.”

PHOTO:

BUSD_KOLLAB_SOSA: Bonita High School sophomore Agatha Sosa has been recognized by Kollab Youth, a leadership program that works with underserved teenaged students to help them discover and explore career opportunities, as its 2025 Youth of the Year for her outreach and mentorship efforts.

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