



WHITTIER UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 28, 2026 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

La Serna High School Reopens Wellness Center with Ribbon-Cutting, Mental Health Fair

WHITTIER – Whittier Union’s La Serna High School celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month on May 19 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the reopening of its on-campus Wellness Center, which helped to kick off La Serna’s annual Mental Health Fair, a lunchtime event for Lancer students designed to help them stay calm during the hectic final weeks of school.

The ribbon-cutting was led by La Serna social worker Alex Harris and the Ethan Carlos Foundation, a nonprofit that supports student achievement and channels the spirit of former La Serna student Ethan Carlos, who died in January 2025.

The Foundation serves youth and local communities through scholarships and grants, mental health initiatives, and community outreach.

“This dedication means the world to us,” Allister Carlos, Ethan’s father, said. “Ethan walked these halls every day and all he ever wanted was to see his classmates and friends happy. When you enter the Wellness Center you will see Ethan’s Promises, words of encouragement and core beliefs that were the essence of his life. Thank you to La Serna for making this happen.”

After Ethan’s death, an assembly was held in the La Serna gym, attended by hundreds of Lancer students paying their respects. Harris arranged for an on-campus grief counseling group, so Ethan’s friends would have someone to talk to about their loss.

“We were so humbled by the response we saw at La Serna. Alex Harris is incredible. The outpouring of love for Ethan means the world to us,” Allister said. “When they asked us to help them redesign the Wellness Center, we couldn’t wait to get started. The Ethan Carlos Foundation is here for La Serna High.”

The renovated Wellness Center has four private cubicles and can be used by students to receive therapy or to de-stress in a comfortable environment.

The room is filled with bits of wisdom from Ethan’s Promise, and silicone message bracelets that say “Live Like Ethan,” “Never Give Up,” and “You Are Enough.”

For her passion in assisting the family during its time of crisis, Harris received the inaugural Help Others Award at the Foundation’s May 19 fundraiser, a night which also saw two La Serna students receiving scholarships from the Foundation.

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For the first time ever, La Serna’s Mental Health Fair was entirely student-led, with Human Services Honors (HUSR) students – partnering with the La Serna Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) and La Serna wellness coordinators and interns – doing all the planning, including choosing the activities, which included bracelet making, glitter tattoos, face painting, and writing inspirational messages on clay pots.

“We are so proud of our HUSR students for taking on this huge responsibility to coordinate the Mental Health Fair,” Harris said. “They came up with all the ideas for the activities, making stress balls, adopting furry animals, and creating a self-empowerment mirror. They even decided on which sweet treats to give to students for completing activities.”

The Health Fair took weeks of planning during one of the busiest times of the year. La Serna senior and HUSR student Amara Baker, who plans to attend Biola University and major in psychology, said she feels that all the extra work at the end of the year is worth it when she sees how appreciative her classmates are for the support.

“Our goal with the Mental Health Fair is to raise awareness of mental health issues and to increase the presence of resources available on and off campus,” Baker said. “We feel fun activities work well as coping mechanisms, and just letting students know they are loved, it goes a long way. When I see people smiling at me and thanking me for my help, it makes me feel grateful and loved.”

During the Health Fair, the Ethan Carlos Foundation distributed bracelets, fidget spinners, buttons, snacks, and Ethan’s Promise cards filled with Ethan’s core beliefs.

“It’s exciting to see our community come through for each other,” La Serna Principal Griselda Castro said. “We’ve got our human services students working alongside our PTSA and putting it all together, bringing awareness, because there is still a mental health stigma. It’s a beautiful thing to have everyone here, including our great friends at the Ethan Carlos Foundation. Thank you to all who made this day a success.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS

WUHS_CEREMONY1: La Serna High School celebrated the reopening of its Wellness Center with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 19 led by representatives of the Ethan Carlos Foundation, who assisted in the renovation, as well as La Serna Human Services Honors students.

WUHS_CEREMONY2: La Serna High School students celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month with its annual Mental Health Fair on May 19. The student-led event is designed to help Lancer students stay calm during the hectic final days of the school year.

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OUR MISSION

The Whittier Union High School District provides all students with an engaging, quality standards-based instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement. Whittier Union High School District works to achieve and maintain excellence in providing a comprehensive education for all students.

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