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PRESS RELEASE

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Village of Support Helps Upland Graduate Drive Toward His Future

UPLAND – What began as a heartfelt request from Upland Unified School District leadership became a powerful demonstration of community support when District leaders, businesses, and community organizations came together to help Upland High School graduate Andrew Aparicio, known to the community as Drew, to take the next step toward his future.

Aparicio, a foster youth and member of Upland High School's Class of 2026, has overcome significant challenges while remaining focused on his education and career goals. Despite living in Rialto and facing limited transportation options, he arranged travel to Upland each day to attend school, determined to create opportunities for himself through hard work and perseverance. He graduated from Upland High on June 4 and will attend California State University, San Bernardino this fall, where he plans to pursue a career as an athletic trainer.

On the morning of his graduation, Aparicio received a life-changing surprise: a reliable vehicle and a network of support designed to help remove barriers standing between him and his goals.

The effort began when Chief Academic Officer Dr. Shinay Bowman learned of Aparicio's transportation challenges and rallied District administrators and managers to help. Over the course of a month, District leaders raised over \$6,000 to support Aparicio's transition to college and adulthood.

Inspired by Aparicio's story, the owners of Ford of Upland gifted him a vehicle, ensuring he would have dependable transportation for college, work, and daily responsibilities. The dealership also committed to covering the cost of car insurance for the first year and providing a \$300 monthly gas stipend for one year, contingent upon Aparicio participating in monthly mentorship meetings with the dealership's general manager.

Additional support came from Chaffey Federal Credit Union, which donated \$1,000, and the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA), which provided a \$500 gift to assist Aparicio as he begins college. Remaining funds raised by the District were used to purchase a high level maintenance package that includes five years of oil changes and a bumper-to-bumper warranty and future insurance costs.

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The generosity inspired an even greater commitment to future students. Ford of Upland has pledged to donate a vehicle annually to a deserving Upland Unified student, while Chaffey Federal Credit Union has committed to making financial support for future students an annual tradition.

"I am incredibly grateful to the Upland community for this amazing gift, which opens up a new world of opportunities for my future," Aparicio said. "This gesture means so much to me and will always be a moment in my life for which I will never stop thanking God. Thank you to everyone who made this possible and supported me along this path. I have so much love and appreciation for this community."

The gift represented more than practical support. It demonstrated the belief an entire community has in Aparicio's potential.

"For many students, transportation is something they never have to think about," Bowman said. "For Drew, it was the one obstacle standing between him and opportunities he had worked incredibly hard to earn. We wanted him to know that his community sees him, believes in him, and is willing to invest in his future."

For District leaders, the effort reflected Upland Unified's commitment to supporting students beyond the classroom and helping them overcome barriers that might otherwise limit their opportunities.

"This is about much more than a car," Superintendent Dr. Lynn Carmen Day said. "It is about addressing barriers, creating opportunities, and demonstrating what can happen when a community comes together on behalf of a young person. Aparicio's story reminds us that every student deserves someone who believes in them, and we are grateful to our partners for helping make that belief tangible."

As he embarks on his college journey, Aparicio carries with him not only the keys to a vehicle, but also the support of a community that believes in his future and is invested in his success.

PHOTO CAPTION

UUSD_Aparicio1: Upland High School graduate Drew Aparicio celebrates beside a vehicle donated by Ford of Upland. The gift, made possible through the collective efforts of Upland Unified leaders, local businesses, and community partners, will provide reliable transportation as Aparicio begins college and pursues his dream of becoming an athletic trainer.

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