

El Monte Union High School District

Community Committed to College and Career



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Sept. 24, 2026 CONTACT: Maria Hernandez PHONE: (909) 447-2406

El Monte High School Celebrates Cherished History During 125th Anniversary Gala

EL MONTE – Under sunny skies that accentuated the blue and white spirit of the day, the El Monte community came together on Sept. 19 to celebrate 125 years of Lion pride, tradition, and excellence at El Monte High School (EMHS), as well as the El Monte Union High School District's quasiquicentennial. Community members, alumni, local representatives, District staff, and Lion student groups gathered to honor the school's cherished and illustrious history, while looking ahead to its future.

More than just a celebration of the school and District, the gala honored the unique culture of El Monte and its many contributions to Southern California.

"Today we celebrate 125 years of history, opportunity, community, and Lion Pride," EMHS Principal and Class of 1989 alumnus Eddie Cuevas said. "I walked this campus as a student, I sat in these classrooms, I cheered for the Lions, and I built friendships. I never would have imagined 37 years later I would have the privilege of serving as principal of El Monte High. For me to be able to stand here before you in this position is one of my greatest accomplishments."

State Senator Susan Rubio and Assemblymember Mike Fong were among the many local elected officials who came to honor El Monte High and the District, with both recognizing the school with official proclamations. Other attendees included a representative of Hilda Solis's Office and members of the El Monte City Board of Education, El Monte City Council, and Rosemead City Council.

Visitors were greeted by cheerleaders and leadership students, as well as local merchants gathered for a vendor fair. Across the EMHS quad — once referred to as the fabled Lion's Den and inspired by Gay's Lion Farm, a nationally known El Monte attraction — classic restored vehicles were proudly displayed by community members and school staff who offered their vehicles for the celebration. The collection included Model-T Fords, 1960s muscle cars, and a customized Harley-Davidson cruiser, alongside tables decorated with old sports trophies and yearbooks.

Superintendent Dr. Eddie Zuniga, an EMHS Class of 1991 alumnus, spoke about the origins of El Monte Union, which began in 1901 with just one classroom for 15 students in an upstairs room at Lexington Avenue Grammar School. Zuniga also celebrated the contributions of past education leaders, including Jenny Tucker Baker, an early advocate for creating a school district in El Monte, and Jack Barton, former El Monte High principal and a local historian.

– MORE –

"I grew up just a couple of blocks away from here and my best memories are the years I spent as a Lion," Zuniga said. "It was my school counselor who believed in my potential and urged me to consider applying to a four-year university. They told me that I had a bright future ahead of me. This is what educators do every day at El Monte High, and throughout our District."

El Monte High Lions young and old mingled with each other, discussing good times and future plans. EMHS Class of 1966 alumnus Hector Ramirez, who returned to the school as its art teacher for 25 years before moving to South El Monte High, recalled when his classrooms were "portables" and were located across the street from the main campus. EMHS freshman Mariah Dominguez, just beginning her high school journey, said she looks forward to navigating her path to success, inspired by the school's history.

"This is a big accomplishment. So many years and it's still an amazing school," Dominguez said. "There have been so many successful students who have come before me, and that same energy still presents itself today. As a new member of the Lion family, my first goal is to become a member of the Associated Student Body."

Celebrants watched a video detailing the rich history of El Monte High and were entertained by El Monte High's a capella singing group, which performed "Dancing Queen" and "Sweet Caroline." Attendees also sang the Lion alma mater, accompanied by the El Monte High marching band, shared a communal meal, toured the campus, then gathered for the 125th anniversary time capsule ceremony.

Among the items placed in the time capsule – which will be opened on the school's 150-year anniversary in 2051 – are Principal Cuevas' letterman jacket, a football jersey and helmet, a laptop computer and mouse, old iPhones, a push-button office phone, Homecoming Court ballots, a Spider-Man comic book, In-N-Out Burger bumper stickers, a souvenir Lion doll, and a box filled with messages from attendees who wrote them that day.

The excitement and pageantry of the day was summed up by former El Monte High principal Doug Halvorsen, who helped establish the El Monte High School Scholarship Fund in 2001.

"This is a story that has been going for 125 years," Halvorsen said. "Buildings change, programs change, generations come and go. But one thing has remained the same, the spirit of El Monte High School. Go Lions!"

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.

El Monte Union High School District

Community Committed to College and Career



PRESS RELEASE

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

EMUHSD 125 ANNIVERSARY 1: El Monte High School a cappella students admire past yearbooks showcasing the accomplishments of generations of students during the school's 125th Anniversary Celebration on Sept. 19, honoring the legacy of El Monte High School and El Monte Union.

EMUHSD 125 ANNIVERSARY 2: El Monte High School cheerleaders pump up the crowd during student performances at the school and District's 125th Anniversary Celebration Sept. 19.

EMUHSD 125 ANNIVERSARY 3: El Monte High School student leaders serve customized sweet treats for community members during the school's 125th Anniversary Celebration on Sept. 19.

EMUHSD 125 ANNIVERSARY 4: El Monte High School Principal Eddie Cuevas shows off his senior sweater before placing it in a time capsule during the school's 125th Anniversary Celebration on Sept. 19.

###

– MORE –