Fontana Unified School District
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## NEWS RELEASE

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# Fontana Unified Student-Led Youth Court Receives Prestigious Service to Youth Award

**FONTANA, CA** – The Fontana School Police Department's (FSPD) Youth Court program was recently recognized by the San Bernardino County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission (JJDPC) with its prestigious 2026 Service to Youth award, honoring its efforts to help students overcome challenges and build a brighter future.

The award spotlights the program and its twofold mission: preventing students from damaging their permanent records and helping them stay on track toward graduation, while also educating them on the judicial process and the importance of compassion and understanding.

Through Youth Court, students have the opportunity to clear their record through a peer-led judicial process. The program works in tandem with FSPD's Fontana Leadership Intervention Program (FLIP), a 16-week initiative for at-promise students who face disciplinary or attendance issues. FLIP received the JJDPC's Service to Youth award in 2024.

"We are very proud of the positive and lasting impact that Youth Court has had on our students and everyone who participates," FSPD Chief Rich Randolph said. "It's heartwarming to see students who have made poor choices come in and have a chance to rehabilitate themselves and start making better decisions for their future. Fontana Unified is a school district that puts its students first."

Youth Court meets every Thursday and consists of two jury panels with approximately 10 FUSD students per panel. Jurors include students who have gone through the intervention process themselves, as well as students interested in law or looking to complete community service. The jurors typically review three or four cases per session.

Youth Court members rotate between various roles, including juror, bailiff, and clerk. Professional adjudicators, who are typically retired and come from the local area, oversee the trials. Defendants are asked questions, the jurors deliberate, then return with a disposition that details what a student must do to clear their record. A disposition can include community service, letters of apology, and education workshops. Defendants are occasionally assigned to the FLIP program.

FSPD Officer Dennis Barnett, who oversees the Youth Court along with his colleagues, Officer Amanda Liabeuf and office manager Leticia Oliva, said the court has been successful in supporting students.

"Over the last three years, for students who have gone through the Youth Court process, only 7% of those students have had further disciplinary issues," Barnett said. "For students who complete the FLIP

*– more –*

program, we have a 100% reduction of recidivism. We are extremely proud of what we have been able to do for our students."

Kaiser High School senior Matthew Guardado was a member of both FLIP and Youth Court during the 2025-26 school year. Working to get a citation cleared, Guardado served on the court for six Thursday afternoon sessions, as well as completing the 16-week FLIP program. Guardado is a strong proponent of both programs, gaining compassion for his classmates as well as learning leadership skills and teamwork.

"If one person fails, we all fail, so you push each other to do better and not give up – everyone is in it together," Guardado, who is planning to study computer engineering, said. "I tried my best to help motivate my classmates. It feels good to help people and it turned my life around academically."

Youth Court partners with local nonprofit Reach Out, which provides assistance in managing the dispositions and caseloads as well as assigning judges. Reach Out also connects students and families with resources to complete their disposition.

"Congratulations to the Fontana School Police Department for this well-deserved honor," Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. "These programs provide critical support to students, helping them get back on track, overcome challenges, and build a strong foundation for future success."

**PHOTO CAPTION:**

**FUSD_YOUTHCOURT1**: The Fontana School Police Department's (FSPD) Youth Court program was recently recognized by the San Bernardino County Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission (JJDPC) with its prestigious 2026 Service to Youth award, honoring its efforts to help students overcome challenges and build a brighter future.

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