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NEWS RELEASE

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Fontana Unified Administrators, Students Honored by Rialto Fontana NAACP

FONTANA, CA – The Rialto Fontana National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) rolled out the red carpet as it honored Fontana Unified administrators, students, and graduates during its annual Community Leadership Awards Banquet, held in the fall.

Southridge Tech Middle School Principal Amber Knight and Poplar Elementary School Teacher on Assignment Ayesha Brooks each received the NAACP Golden Apple Leadership Award, while Jurupa Hills High School freshman Cyrus Moss, Summit High School senior Marcus Vernardo, Jr., and Summit Class of 2026 graduate Jordyn Tate were honored for their contributions to the Fontana community.

Brooks came to the District in 2015, serving as the Dean of Student Supports and Director of Multi-Tiered System of Supports before helping FUSD establish its Community School program, which currently includes four schools and is expanding. Brooks is involved in family and community engagement, helping to establish community partnerships with local businesses such as God's Pantry, Best Buy, Costco and Chase Bank that spur student achievement and family empowerment.

Brooks said receiving the Golden Apple Award from the NAACP is meaningful. Her parents grew up in the Deep South, working tirelessly to give Brooks opportunities to learn and grow. A California native, Brooks has dedicated her 35-year career to advancing equity in education and plans to retire at the end of the 2026-27 school year.

"My parents told me that in the South they marched, prayed, and persevered, so that the next generation could thrive," Brooks said. "That has always been my goal in education, to help our kids have a great experience while working with their parents and community to talk about their needs and concerns, so that we can ensure our children are receiving equity in education."

Knight began her career at the District as a special services classroom aide in 2009, and after receiving her teaching credential, she spent several years as a special education teacher before transitioning into administration as an assistant principal at A.B. Miller High School in 2019. Knight is now in her fourth year leading Southridge Tech as principal.

Knight, whose husband Shadon Knight is a Fontana Unified Safety Officer, is known for leading with respect and enthusiasm. On "Happy Fridays," Knight can be seen blasting music in the Southridge Tech parking lot while she greets families and fist bumps with students.

"I love working with middle school students and seeing them grow. I love that I can be a tiny part of their story. Students like Cyrus Moss inspire me. I am so proud of what he's been able to accomplish,"

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Knight said. “It’s really about building relationships, talking to the students, and guiding them. I love seeing what kind of people they become.”

Moss was recognized by the NAACP with its Youth Leadership Award. Moss has received national recognition since leading the petition as a Dolores Huerta International Academy sixth-grader that drove the renaming of Randall Pepper Middle School to O’Day Short Middle School, honoring a pioneering Fontana African American family. Moss later advocated for eighth-graders to be included on the Superintendent’s Advisory Council and served while a student at Southridge Tech.

Now at Jurupa Hills, Moss has continued his passion for advocacy serving as a member of both the City of Fontana’s Mayor’s Youth Board and the Teach Democracy Youth Board, and was named the Grand Marshal for the 2026 Fontana Black History Month Parade in February. Moss is also an accomplished DJ, having spun records at Stage Red in Fontana, the L.A. County Fair, and the Inland Empire 66ers baseball team.

“It’s an honor to be recognized by the NAACP, along with my former principal, Ms. Knight,” Moss said. “She is an amazing principal, and I’ve learned a lot from her.”

As an honor roll student actively involved in academics, athletics, and leadership, Vernardo, Jr. received the Rialto Fontana NAACP-sponsored Youth Award. Vernardo, Jr. is a member of the Summit High track and field team and is the founder and president of sales for the school’s student enterprise club, Virtual Enterprises.

“This award means a lot to me personally, especially when I get to share it with so many great people from the District,” said Vernardo Jr., who plans to study business and marketing. “I liked seeing everyone getting their awards and also receiving the opportunity to network with professionals who can help shape my future.”

Tate was honored as 2026 Miss Black Awareness Queen for the Inland Empire. She is currently attending Mt. San Antonio College, with plans to transfer to Loma Linda University and pursue a career in nuclear medicine. Tate serves as an ambassador for Black Girls Run, which promotes health and wellness among Black women.

“We are so proud that the advocacy and commitment that our educators and students have within our schools also extends out into their communities,” Superintendent Miki R. Inbody said. “The NAACP awards recognize not only their dedication, but also the meaningful impact of their work and the positive change their leadership inspires in those around them.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

FUSD_NAACP AWARDS1: The Rialto Fontana National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) honored (from left to right) Jurupa Hills High School freshman Cyrus Moss, Summit High School senior Marcus Vernardo, Jr., Summit Class of 2026 graduate Jordyn Tate, and Southridge Tech Middle School Principal Amber Knight during its annual Community Leadership Awards Banquet, held in the fall.

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